

Cross-border Cooperation of Urban Regions in the Baltic Sea Area

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Abstract

Ausgehend von der Annahme, dass die Ostseeregion primär eine von Städten und urbanen Zentren geprägte Region ist, untersucht diese Studie die Entstehung und Entwicklung grenzüberschreitender Zusammenarbeit von Großstradtregionen im Ostseeraum. Auf der Grundlage poststrukturalistischer Forschungsansätze ergänzt durch Governancetheorien wird ein umfassendes theoretisches Instrumentarium erarbeitet, mit dem drei Fälle grenzüberschreitender Zusammenarbeit von Großstadtregionen aus der Ostseeregion untersucht werden. Die konzeptionelle Grundidee besteht hierbei darin, Vergleichbarkeit nicht durch die Anwendung vorher festgelegter Kriterien, sondern durch die Formulierung und Anwendung eines gleichbleibenden Katalogs offener Forschungsfragen herzustellen. Zunächst werden für diese Arbeit drei Einzelfallstudien zur Öresundregion, Göteborg-Oslo Region und der Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn erstellt. Dann werden in einer vergleichenden Gegenüberstellung Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede erarbeitet und auf dieser Grundlage Faktoren, welche die Entstehung und Entwicklung grenzüberschreitender Zusammenarbeit begünstigen, abgeleitet. Darüber hinaus rückt das Ergebnis der Analyse drei weitere Aspekte für die Entwicklung grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit in den Mittelpunkt, die in angewendeten theoretischen Ansätzen bisher unberücksichtigt geblieben sind, die aber erheblichen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der einzelnen Region haben: geographische Lage, Timing und Marginalisierung.

Based on the assumption that the Baltic Sea Region is primarily composed of cities and urban areas, this study explores the evolution and development of the cross-border cooperation of large urban areas in the Baltic Sea Region. Using post-structuralist theoretical approaches supplemented with governance theory, the study develops a comprehensive theoretical tool for the analysis of three cases of cross-border cooperation of urban areas in the Baltic Sea Region. The conceptual idea was to safeguard comparability through the application of a common set of open research questions, rather than to apply a set of pre-given criteria. First, this piece of research provides the three single case studies of the Öresund Region, the Gothenburg-Oslo Region and the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. Then a comparative analysis elaborates on the commonalities and differences and derives supporting factors for cross-border cooperation based on that background. Finally, the comparative analysis also points to three additional relevant aspects for the development of cross-border cooperation that have not been included into the theoretical approaches but which had remarkable influence on the development of the single cases: geographical localisation, timing and marginalisation.

Acronyms

AER – Assembly of European Regions
AEBR – Association of European Border Regions
BALTMET – Baltic Metropolises
BDF – Baltic Development Forum
BEN – Baltic Euroregional Network
BRG – Business Region Göteborg
BSR – Baltic Sea Region
BSRI – Baltic Sea Region Initiative
BSSSC – Baltic Sea Sub States Conference
CBSS – Council of the Baltic Sea States
CPMR – Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
COINCO – Corridor of Innovation and Cooperation (INTERREG-project)
EC – European Communities
EEA – European Economic Area
EEC – European Economic Cooperation
ENP – European Neighbourhood Policy
ERDF – European Regional Development Fund
ERT – European Round Table of Industrialists
ESDP – European Spatial Development Policy
ESS – European Spallation Source
EURES – EUROpean Employment Services
EUSBSR – EU Strategy on the Baltic Sea Region
HBR – Helsingborgs Business Region
HTE – Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio
HUR – Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd/Greater Copenhagen Authority
INTERREG – EU Programme to stimulate cooperation between regions
IPA – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
KKR – Kommunernes Kontaktråd (Municipal Liaison Councils)
MAX IV – Synchrotron radiation facility
MEP – Member of European Parliament
METREX – Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas
NÄRP – Nordisk ämbetsmannakommitté för regionalpolitik – Nordic Committee for Senior Officials for Regional Policy

NCM – Nordic Council of Ministers
ND – Northern Dimension
NDI – Northern Dimension Initiative
NDAP – Northern Dimension Action Plan
NGO – Non-governmental Organisation
NUTS – Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques
PHARE – EU instrument to support the pre-accession process in Central and Eastern European candidate countries
PS – Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus/Estonian Constitution
RGF – Regional Growth Forum
SEA – Single European Act
STRING – political cross - border partnership between Hamburg, Schleswig – Holstein, Capital Region of Denmark, Region Zealand, city of Copenhagen and Region Skåne
TACIS – EU programm to promote transito to market economy and to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
TEC – Treaty establishing the European Community
TEN – Transeuropean Networks
TEN-T – Transeuropean Networks - Transport
TFCMA – Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Assistance
UHCM – Union of Harju County Municipalities

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*"More than two thirds of the European population lives in urban areas.
Cities are places where both problems emerge and solutions are found.
They are fertile ground for science and technology,
for culture and innovation, for individual and collective creativity,
and for mitigating the impact of climate change.
However, cities are also places where problems such as
unemployment, segregation and poverty are concentrated."*

(Johannes Hahn, EU Commissioner for Regional Policy,
in: European Union 2011a: III).

1. Cross-border Cooperation of Urban Regions in the Baltic Sea Area

Over centuries, cities have been both the nucleus for economic, cultural and social progress, and a place where the impact of these developments on society becomes tangible. Particularly in the context of industrialisation and the almost insatiable need for workers, rural depopulation started and brought large numbers of peasants to the cities. Slum-like working-class neighbourhoods evolved and turned the social question into a permanent issue in an increasingly urbanised society. After a period with a strong focus on the nation-state during the 19th and 20th century, supra-national trends like increasing interspatial competition, globalisation and particularly Europeanisation have brought the city and its importance for the overall economic development back into focus. Moreover, the conceptualisation of the city was widened through the inclusion of its hinterland towards its functional area in form of a postmodern agglomeration (Henkel/Herkommer, 2004: 54).

These postmodern agglomerations are composed of a number of formally independent territorial-administrative units, whose de facto interrelations create a need for more coordination and cooperation. Additionally, Neil Brenner identifies an important shift from the Fordist-Keynesian period, “which emphasized administrative modernization, interterritorial equalization and the efficient delivery of public services” to locational policies focussing on the promotion of competitiveness and the attraction of external capital investment (Brenner, 2003: 15). Thus, metropolitan governance has two interrelated dimensions. First, it takes into account that administrative borders increasingly are being blurred through socio-economic practices that reach across the established territorial boundaries. Secondly, the awareness of these functional interrelations between centre and suburb has also brought about the idea of using this feature in order to raise the region’s profile as a business location.

According to the EU’s Report *Cities of Tomorrow – challenges, visions, ways forward*, these functional relations are also increasingly found in two types of trans-national forms of city cooperation. The first type comprises *cross-border cooperations* of “neighbouring cities, which belong to the same Functional Urban Area on different sides of national borders” (European Union, 2011a: 85).¹ The second type describes

¹ In some cases these cities are described as twin-cities, like Harparanda-Tornio (Finland/Sweden), Frankfurt/Oder–Śluby, Görlitz–Zgorzelec (Germany/Poland), Strasbourg–Kehl am Rhein (France/Germany) or Valka–Valga (Estonia/Latvia). Moreover, Anishenko and Sergunin point to the

“cities that belong to a common broader geographical basin with shared features” (European Union, 2011a: 85). They all cooperate on issues like transport, regional planning, economic development, tourism, culture, research, education and employment. Examples named for the former group are Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai (France/Belgium) and Copenhagen–Malmö (Denmark/Sweden), while Vienna–Bratislava–Győr–Brno (Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic) stand for the latter group (European Union, 2011a: 85).² Combining both the cross-border and the urban dimension, this piece of research concentrates on three specific cases where urban areas are localised on a nation-state border and where the so-called hinterland is characterised by a nation-state boundary. The focus on urban areas is based on the idea, that these share specific challenges, they see themselves embedded in similar contexts, moreover, strategic decisions on that level are also often of national importance and thus have an extraordinary presence on the national political agenda.

These types of city-based cross-border cooperations are embedded in both national political systems and in the European level and policies, for example in form of the EU’s *Territorial Agenda* that was formulated in order to forward a balanced polycentric territorial development and to achieve territorial cohesion. Moreover, the Territorial Agenda explicitly requires integration in cross-border and transnational functional areas in order to succeed in economic global competition, both in terms of infrastructure and culture (European Union, 2011b: 5). Thus, cross-border cooperation of cities and city regions has become a natural aspect in European policies and strategies, also in the relatively new macro-regional approaches of the European Union like the EU’s Baltic Sea Region Strategy and the corresponding cooperation programmes.

The idea of the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) as a macro-region has been prevalent in particular since the fall of the Iron Curtain and comprises the intention “that the BSR should be able to mobilise its territorial capital in an integrative manner in order to become a stronger player in the realm of international territorial competition on the

general conceptual fuzziness regarding the classification of cooperation of cities and the terminological diversity used in this field like sister cities, related towns, bridge cities, etc., and provide a specific understanding of the characteristics of a twin city. To these belong: geographical proximity, common history, they seek cooperation, often located on the opposite banks of a river, mixed ethnic composition and bilingual, legal or institutional basis for cooperation (Anishenko/ Sergunin, 2012: 19-21).

² Analytically, this distinction provides a good tool to distinguish specific forms of cross-border cooperation of cities and city regions, while, empirically, the distinction between both groups of cross-border city cooperation may not be as sharp as suggested, in some forms they may even overlap.

one hand while also reducing regional disparities within the BSR on the other” (Schmitt/Dubois, 2008: 13). In face of the fact that 73 per cent of the population in the BSR lives in cities and the unhalted trend for an increasing “spatial polarisation of population towards capitals, larger agglomerations” and suburbanisation (Schmitt/Dubois, 2008: 17), metropolitan areas are “as internationalised nodes of complex transactions in respect of economic activities, information, power, culture” (Schmitt/Dubois, 2008: 13) the main drivers of spatial integration, not least due to the specific knowledge and skills of their inhabitants.³

The urban character of the Baltic Sea Region is often traced back to the Hanseatic League and was particularly often referred to in the 1990s. It is rather interesting that both Pertti Joenniemi and Alan Sweedler (1995) as well as Martin Åberg (1998) point to two superordinate networks of cities located in the Baltic Sea Region’s western and eastern part. While Joenniemi and Sweedler point to Copenhagen-Gothenburg-Malmö and Helsinki-Tallinn-St. Petersburg (1995: 13), Åberg points to Hamburg-Copenhagen-Malmö and Stockholm-Helsinki-St. Petersburg as the major centres. If one adds Oslo to this enumeration of major cities, it provides a comprehensive sketch of today’s transnational urban gravitation centres around the Baltic Rim, which are also characterised by distinct cross-border collaboration activities.

Within the Baltic Sea Region, there are for the time being three cases of cross-border cooperation that include major urban areas. (1) The Oresund Region, having the cities of Malmö and Copenhagen at its core, is the most prominent example. (2) The Gothenburg-Oslo Region (GO-Region) and (3) the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn are less known, but rather interesting cases of urban area based cross-border collaboration. Despite having two large cities in their core, the three cases vary regarding their institutionalisation, their physical distance and their intensity of cooperation.

Apart from the general empirical finding of raising cross-border activities among urban areas, the most general question to be answered in this study is how these cases evolve and develop. A comparative perspective will add a second analytical layer as it will help to find out whether and why these cases develop similarly or differently and thus

³ In fact, the idea of the Baltic Sea Region primarily relying on cities and city regions goes back to its Hanseatic heritage. Particularly during the period of the Hanseatic League, cities were strong economic and political actors and laid the ground for the tight network of cities and city regions that characterises the structure of the Baltic Sea Region until today.

identify specific aspects that further cross-border cooperation between urban areas and what we can learn from the respective cases.

The basic conceptual idea for the analytical tool applied in this study is to use a research design that safeguards comparability and space for the cases' individuality. Thus, it combines Paasi's post-structuralist approach of the *institutionalisation of regions* with multi-level and regional governance, and develops a set of common research questions. Before chapter 2 exposes the study's theoretical background, the next sections provide an overview of the state of the art and a general outline of the thesis.

1.1 State of the Art

Although the vast number of publications on cross-border cooperation focuses on the European Union and its neighbouring countries, there is a rising tendency to investigate cross-border practices in non-European areas too.⁴ Having made cross-border cooperation an important activity field and having turned it into one of its main policy objects, the EU provides rather favourable and unique preconditions for cross-border activities both between the EU member states and its neighbouring countries. Particularly the INTERREG programme as well as the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) provides considerable funding for cross-border activities. Thus, it is no surprise that almost all borders in Europe are covered by more or less functioning forms of cross-border cooperation and that the core of cross-border research is done in and about Europe.

This vast literature is most suitably grouped into case studies⁵, comparative case studies⁶ and issue-based studies⁷. Among the many varying cases of cross-border

⁴ With their book *Globalisation, Regionalization and cross-border regions* (2002) Markus Perkmann and Ngai-Ling Sum published the first anthology that covered cases from Asia, Europe, North America and even Africa. Before, Joachim Blatter had published the first comparative analysis of European and North American forms of cross-border cooperation in his book *Entgrenzung der Staatenwelt? Politische Institutionenbildung in grenzüberschreitenden Regionen in Europa und Nordamerika* (2000). In 2008 Fredrik Söderbaum and Ian Taylor published the anthology *Afro-regions: the dynamics of cross-border micro-regionalism in Africa*. In 2011 an anthology on *Cross-border governance in Asia: Regional Issues and Mechanisms* was published by Cheema, G.Shabbir, Mc Nally, Christopher and Popovski, Vesselin.

⁵ i.e., Lundén, Thomas/Zalamans, Dennis, 2001: *Local co-operation, ethnic diversity and state territoriality – The case of Haparanda and Tornio on the Sweden-Finland border*, GeoJournal 54, pp. 33-42.

⁶ i.e., Boman, Julia/Berg, Eiki, 2007: *Identity and Institutions Shaping Cross-border Cooperation at the Margins of the European Union*, in: *Regional and Federal Studies* 2007, pp. 195-215; Andrew Church and Peter Reed provide a comparative analysis on cooperation of urban areas in the UK and France with a

cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, there are three cases of cross-border cooperation involving urban areas: the Oresund region, the GO-Region and the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. These three cases have, to varying degrees, been covered in scientific literature.

Literature on the Oresund region is quite broad, including a wide range of reports written by regional and supra-regional organisations like the Øresund Institute⁸, the Oresund Committee⁹ or the OECD¹⁰, scientific articles and anthologies, as well as non-scientific or popular scientific contributions.¹¹ The peak in scientific publishing was around the turn of the millennium. The Oresund region has been analysed from many different perspectives, for example Bygvrå and Westlund analysed *Shopping behaviour in the Oresund region before and after the establishment of the fixed link between Denmark and Sweden (2005)*¹², Torben Dall Schmidt the development of the labour market (2005)¹³ or Teis Hansen investigated the Oresund region as a regional innovation system in biotechnology (2013)¹⁴. Out of the high number of publications the following section presents a selection of seven publications that have been particularly useful for the subsequent study.

With two articles, Anna Wieslander has contributed to research on the Oresund region. The first article *Att bygga Öresundsregionen: Från 1960-talets utvecklingsoptimism till*

shared sea border (Church, Andrew/Reid, Peter, 1996: Urban Power, International Networks and Competition: The Example of Cross-border Cooperation, in: Urban Studies 33(7), pp. 1297-1318.)

⁷ i.e., Smallbone, David/Welter, Friederike/Xheneti, Mirela, 2012: *Cross-border Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in Europe's Border Regions*, Cheltenham.

⁸ The most recent publications of the Øresund Institute are: Gustafsson, Thea Wiborg, 2010: *Event og mødeindustri – Danmark, Sverige og Øresund 2010*, Malmö; Olshov, Anders/ Lindqvist, Elin/ Wichmann Matthiesen, Christian, 2010: *The Location of Nordic and Global Headquarters 2010*, Malmö.

⁹ Publications from the Oresund Committee cover both strategic papers as well as reports on specific issues, like the effects of the bridge and its potentials in the Oresund region (*Broeffekter og muligheder i Øresundsregionen*, 2012) or the Oresundregion as a center for and environmentally friendly technologies (*Øresundsregionen – Ett center for miljövänlig teknologi*, 2009).

¹⁰ In 2003 the Oresund region was the first cross-border region that was included in the OECD Territorial Review Series (OECD, 2003: *Oresund, Denmark/Sweden*, Paris).

¹¹ Anders Olshov, managing director of the Øresund Institute, published the most recent contribution to the regional discourse: *Øresunds regionen Københavns udnyttede mulighed (The Oresund Region – Copenhagen's unused potential)*. Here he provides prospects of how the region could develop during the coming decades. His main thesis is that the regional project is stagnating and that there is need for more action in order to realise the idea of an integrated transnational metropolis. Another example is Helms, Svante (2004): *Scenemesterens sejrsang. At skabe, udøve og legitimere magt*, Copenhagen.

¹² Bygvrå, S./Westlund, H. (2005) *Shopping behaviour in the Øresund Region before and after the establishment of the fixed link between Denmark and Sweden*. GeoJournal, 61, pp. 41-52.

¹³ Schmidt, Torben Dall, 2005: *Cross-border regional enlargement in Øresund*, in GeoJournal, 64 (3), pp. 249-258.

¹⁴ Hansen, Teis, 2013: *Bridging regional innovation: cross-border collaboration in the Øresund Region*, Geografisk Tidsskrift-Danish Journal of Geography, 113(1), pp. 25-38.

*1960-talets lapptäcksregionalism*¹⁵ (1997) provides a comprehensive historical overview of the early beginnings of regional cooperation in the Oresund region until today. In continuation of this historical overview of the early beginnings, the article *Building the Øresund Region* (1999) elaborates continuity and change regarding several things: e.g. topics, actors, institutions and interests in the overall regional process since the 1960s. Thus, both contributions taken together are very useful as cooperation in the Oresund region is not reduced to the construction of the bridge but is presented as the outcome of a long period of regional interaction of varying intensity.

In his study *Die Öresund-Brücke: Ein innerstädtisches Bauwerk? Zu Konstruktion und Realität der grenzüberschreitenden Stadtregion Kopenhagen – Malmö*¹⁶ (2000), Torsten Stein gives a – both empirically and analytically – profound analysis of the regionalisation process in the Oresund region from its early beginnings until the turn of the millennium. Despite not being widely received in the scientific Oresund discourse, it is an important source that helps to understand the main ideas behind the regional process and the influence of specific actors on the regional processes across the Oresund. According to his conclusions, the Oresund region is primarily based on regional economic considerations that are mainly founded on the analysis of economic geographers.

In his article *The Summoning of the Øresund Region* (2001), Per-Olof Berg provides an analysis of the constructive function of the way regional actors talk about a region. Berg shows that the identification and continuous articulation of the region's basic characteristics turns them into an inherent part of the general region-building process, thus, they have an important function in the process of establishing both a common understanding of the region and the cross-border entity as a political arena.

In his doctoral thesis *Öresundsregion – bli-till! De geografiska visionernas diskursiva rytm*¹⁷ (2003), Richard Ek dismantles the different strands in the discourse on the Oresund region, their ideological background, how they interplay and reinforce each other, and how they unfold their power in the regional process. Thus, Richard Ek provides an interesting insight into the conceptual background of the Oresund region, including both the discourse of the 1960s and the new visions formulated in the 1990s.

¹⁵ *To build the Oresund region: From the 1960s development optimism to the 1960s patchwork-regionalism.*

¹⁶ *The Oresund bridge: an inner city building? On the construction and reality of the cross-border city-region Copenhagen-Malmö.*

¹⁷ *Oresund region – come into existence! The geographical visions' discursive rhythm.*

Ek points to many crucial aspects of the regional process, like hidden power constellations and the role of the idea of competing city-regions.

In their book *Nätverk söker förankring: Öresundsregionen i ett demokratiperspektiv*¹⁸ (2005), Patrik Hall, Kristian Sjøvik and Ylva Stubbergaard analyse the democratic aspect of cooperation in the Oresund region. They investigate decision-making processes in the Oresund region, criticise the low degree of politicisation, the lack of a public discourse and thus identify a lack of inclusiveness of the political processes in the cross-border region. Finally, they provide several development scenarios for the future of the Oresund region.¹⁹

For the sake of completeness, the most recent publication on the Oresund region, *The Euro and its Rivals* (2011), by the American anthropologist Gustav Peebles has to be mentioned. Peebles analyses the developments in the Oresund region around the year 2000 from the perspective of competing ideas for a common currency for the region. Although he covers a very interesting aspect of the discussions around the turn of the millennium and provides an enlightening analysis on the multidimensionality of the currency aspect in the cross-border context, this book has not been of significant importance in context of the subsequent analysis, as the idea of a common currency has lost its significance in face of the negative outcome of the referenda on that issue, and as alternative ideas for a regional currency did not gain general acceptance.

In contrast to the rather diverse and comprehensive coverage of the Oresund region, the Gothenburg-Oslo region (GO-Region) is a *white spot* both in academic and non-academic literature. Thus, information on the GO-Region is primarily gathered through its annual report, reports on specific regional projects, strategic material from its member organisations as well as semi-structured interviews.

Compared to the GO-Region, coverage of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn in academic literature is broader, including one comprehensive case study and some passages and sections in wider research designs.

¹⁸ *Network seeking anchoring: The Oresund region in a democratic perspective.*

¹⁹ Subsequent to this study, Patrik Hall used the results on the limited degree of democratisation of the Oresund region to ask the question of to what extent cross-border cooperation could contribute to resolving the problem of legitimacy and democracy in the European Union (Hall, Patrick, 2008: Opportunities for Democracy in Cross-border Regions? Lessons from the Øresund Region, *Regional Studies*, 42 (3), pp. 423-435.

In 2002, Jussi S. Jauhiainen published the first article with a reference to the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn in the *Journal of Baltic Studies* under the title *Territoriality of Topocracy of Cross-Border Networks*. In this article, he provides a comparative study of three cross-border networks in order to show that cross-border cooperation is mainly influenced by the European level, controlled by the state and driven by public authorities. The four pages on the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn provide an overview of the basic facts on the region, its institutional structure and its main fields of activity. Although the article provides a good overview of the Euregio's activities, the analytical focus is not so much on the single cases but on the determining factors of cross-border cooperation in general.

In 2004, Helsinki-Tallinn was included in the study *Kaksoiskaupunkija vai kaupunkipareja? Tapaustutkimukset Helsinki-Tallinna, Tornio-Haaparanta, Imatra-Svetogorsk*²⁰ by Piia Heliste, Riitta Kosonen and Karoliina Loikkanen. This study provides a broad overview and comparison of three named cases of cross-border twin cities at the Finnish border. It discovers the different purposes and different forms of institutionalisation in the respective cultural, socio-economic and historical context. The chapter focussing on Helsinki-Tallinn gives a comprehensive analysis on cooperation between both regions, ranging from the historical background to the public sector, labour market and training, to the strongly diversified contacts with regard to business and economy, including both bilateral initiatives and activities within the forum of the Euregio. Thus, the study provides an important state of regional cooperation around the year 2004.

The most fruitful case study on the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn is the article *Reorganizing cross- border Governance Capacity – The case of the Helsinki Tallinn Euregio* published by Tarmo Pikner in 2008. The aim of the study was to give insight into the organisational development of cross-border governance in the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn and its impact on innovative cross-border development in its wider European context. Pikner explicitly does not deliver a classical region-building study that is in search for a fully integrated region with a common identity, but he wants to understand the fragmented and multi-scaled interregional governance processes. As the first in-depth approach to the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, the study provides profound and important insight. However, at some points the article could have been more refined i.e. with

²⁰ *Twin cities or pair of cities? Case studies on Helsinki-Tallinn, Tornio-Haaparanta, Imatra-Svetogorsk.*

regard to cultural proximity. As the following study takes up important aspects of Pikner's research, the subsequent study is of complementary character as new developments are integrated into the analysis, particularly regarding the single member organisation's interests.

In 2010, Katri Liis Lepik published her cumulative doctoral thesis on *Cross-Border Cooperation Institutional Organisation and its Role in Regional Development*. This book is based on three articles and comprises a synopsis giving an overview of the study's theoretical background, method and results. The article *Cross-border Cooperation Institution in Building a Knowledge Cross-Border Region* by Katri-Liis Lepik and Merle Krigul provides a particularly interesting insight into the institutional aspect of region-building in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. Regarding cross-border regions as part of a knowledge management process provides some interesting insights into how to manage such an entity. Nonetheless, the fact that both authors have been employees at the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn both as managers and project managers has to be kept in mind. Even though the authors themselves point to that fact, this interconnectedness between researcher and object of investigation has the potential to be particularly fruitful as both authors share a specific and deep knowledge of the Euregio's internal structures but it may also blur personal and scientific interests. Aware of this ambiguity, the author includes this publication as it still provides interesting perspectives.²¹

Finally, there is one single comparative study that covers both the Oresund Region and the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, Freya E. Brune's master thesis on *Cross-border City Cooperation in the Baltic Sea: Talsinki and the Øresund* (2006). This piece of research poses the question to what extent Talsinki can learn from the experiences made in the Oresund in order to become a successful cross-border city cooperation. To conceptualise a comparative cross-border study as a potential learning process provides inspiring ideas, though, the material basis of the study is rather thin and

²¹ The first article in Lepik's dissertation on *Euroregions as Mechanisms for Strengthening Cross-Border Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region* takes a more general view on cross-border regions and identifies their main characteristics and problems in the Baltic Sea Region, particularly of those bordering the third countries. Furthermore, she forwards the idea to distinguish between three 'levels of development' of cross-border organisations and presents some ideas on how to make cross-border cooperation more stable. In the third article of Lepik's dissertation *Introducing Living Lab's Method as Knowledge Transfer from One Socio-Institutional Context to Another: Evidence from Helsinki-Tallinn Cross-Border Region* concentrates on the application of Living Lab method in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. The Living Lab's method is used in order to test new technology devices in a private context.

generally lacks references to central research, particularly regarding the Oresund case, thus the overall results are of limited conclusiveness.

In a nutshell, the coverage of the single case studies in scientific literature varies remarkably. While the Oresund region is rather well covered, the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn attracted less attention in academic literature and the GO-Region still is a white spot in the scientific debate.

Moreover, there is a general lack in qualitative and systematic comparative research on cross-border regions. Thus, the contribution of this study is threefold. First of all, this study aims, in case of the Oresund Region and the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, to update research and introduces the GO-Region as a third case into the academic debate. Secondly, the single case studies take the individuality of the specific case into account but do also enable a systematic comparative analysis and thus help to understand the evolution and development of cross-border cooperation. Finally, the comparative discussion of the three cases helps to identify factors that may favour or hinder the establishment of cross-border regions.

1.2 Thesis Outline

The analytical part of the study is divided in two parts. The first part elaborates the theoretical background of the study and develops a comprehensive research design based on Iver B. Neumann's *New Region-building Approach*, Anssi Paasi's *Institutionalisation of Regions* as well as Liesbet Hooghe's and Gary Marks' *multi-level* and Dietrich Fürst's *regional governance* approaches (chapter 2).

The research questions formulated in chapter two are the guiding lines for the analysis of the single case studies in chapter three and their comparison. This empirical part starts with a section on the international context of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (chapter 3). It refers to the EU's and the Nordic Council of Minister's strategies and policies towards the BSR and their importance for cross-border cooperation. Having examined the international background, the study focuses on the single case studies that are organised along the same principles (chapters 4, 5, 6).

Accordingly, the first section of each case study provides general background information and focuses on important factors in the early phase of region-building that finally lead to the formal institutionalisation of today's cross-border body. In the

second step each chapter analyses the institutional structure established. Moreover, it detects the territorial background of the single member organisations through an overview of the prevailing local government structures, including relevant reforms and changes. In a next step, the study focuses on the organisation's single members, their strategies, priorities and the role that these assign to the cross-border dimension. This is followed by an analysis on contextual perception, and symbolic shaping before providing a preliminary conclusion on each case study. Chapter (7) provides a comprehensive comparison of these three case studies, while the last section gives a final summary as well as prospects and ideas for further research (chapter 8).

2. Theoretical Considerations on Transnational and Cross-border Activities of Sub-state Entities

Research on cross-border and transnational regions is a truly interdisciplinary and cross-cutting field of research. Scholars from many different disciplines, such as anthropology, geography, international relations, law, political science or ethnology analyse cross-border and transnational activities. In the context of the *relational turn* in social sciences that puts processes, interpersonal relations and social practices into focus, theoretical and conceptual approaches have been converging over the last decades and are characterised by significant intersections and overlaps. Within political science, cross-border and transnational actions can be localised in specific sub-disciplines such as international relations and governance studies.

Within international relations theory there are mainly three approaches that provide instruments to analyse transnational and cross-border relations: (1) paradiplomacy, (2) transnational relations, and (3) regionalism.

*Paradiplomacy*²² is a term primarily coined by the North American scholars Ivo Duchacek²³ and Panayotis Soldatos²⁴ in the middle of the 1980s. The purpose of this advance was to get to grips with the increasing international activities of non-central governments that were one indicator for the tremendous changes in international politics during the years to come (Keating, 1999).²⁵

In contrast to this focus on non-central governments, Thomas Risse-Kappen generally

²² Iñaki Aguirre provides a comprehensive critique on the term paradiplomacy in his article *Making Sense of Paradiplomacy? An Intertextual Inquiry about a Concept in Search of a Definition*. He argues that the term paradiplomacy is absolutely misleading as the activities of non-central governments are “definitely not abnormal, not even a parallel form of ,diplomacy””. In contrast he proposes describing the international activities of non-central governments as ,post-diplomatic’ “because it is a process that moves beyond the nation state, that is, “beyond diplomacy” (1999: 205).

²³ Cf. Duchacek, Ivo/Latouche, Daniel/Stevenson, Garth (ed.), 1988: *Perforated Sovereignities and International Relations. Trans-Sovereign Contacts of Subnational Governments*. New York. Duchacek, Ivo D., 1990: *Perforated Sovereignities: Towards a Typology of New Actors in International Relations*, in: Michelmann, Hans J./Soldatos, Panayotis: *Federalism and International Relations: The Role of Subnational Units*, Oxford, pp. 1-34.

²⁴ Soldatos, Panayotis, 1990: *An Explanatory Framework for the Study of Federal States as Foreign-policy Actors*, in: Hans Michelmann, Panayotis Soldatos (ed.): *Federalism and International Relations: the Role of Subnational Units*, Oxford, pp. 34-53.

²⁵ Magnus Jerneck provides a comprehensive and interesting overview of the city of Malmö’s paradiplomatic’ relations in his article on *Malmö – the Centre of a Europeanized Region in Southern Sweden?* In: Wellmann, Christian (ed.), 1998: *From town to town – Local Authorities as Transnational Actors*, Hamburg, pp. 83-98.

widened the concept of the political actor in his work on *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In – Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*. Including both nation-state, sub-state, economic and societal actors he also implicitly broadened the understanding of what, in general, is regarded as international relations. According to him, transnational relations describe “regular interaction across national boundaries when at least one actor is a non-state agent or does not operate on behalf of a national government or an inter-governmental organization” (Risse-Kappen, 1995: 3). In this manner, Risse includes the social and the transgovernmental character of these relations. While this broad conception of the political actor in international relations is open to include cross-border relations, transnational relations in general remain conceptually silent with regard to cross-border cooperation concentrating on the influence of NGOs and multinational enterprises in international politics.

In contrast to these relatively clearly delineable approaches, regionalism covers a wide range of theoretical concepts for regional activities. Literature generally differs between *old* and *new regionalism*. Old regionalism stands in the context of the super-ordinate theoretical debate on liberalism and realism while new regionalism is inspired by social constructivism. New regionalism widens the perspective on international relations and primarily focuses on norms and identity²⁶-formation. It regards the process of shaping a region as most physically displayed in common decisions. Thus, identity and decision-making processes are regarded as deeply interwoven and mutually influencing aspects of regional processes that are embedded in a multi-level context in the face of an ever increasing networked world.

²⁶ The scientific literature on identity is manifold, yet the high number of publications on the topic has neither lead to an increasing concentration of the debate nor a clear conception of identity (Schmitt-Egner, 2005: 101). While Peter Schmitt-Egner criticises the concept and tries to sharpen it for research on European and regional integration, Bernd Henningsen generally regards it as problematic to transfer a concept from individual psychology to communities. In his essay *On identity – No identity: An essay on the Constructions, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea* he proposes replacing the term identity by a semantically more open term such as ‘we-feeling’ (Henningsen, 2011: 61). Analogous to his argumentation one could argue that the use of the term identity evokes theoretical expectations that can hardly be met empirically. Interestingly, Anssi Paasi (see 2.1.1) obviously also avoids the term identity; instead he speaks about regional consciousness. From all three perspectives, regularly acting together and taking decisions together doubtlessly has consequences on relations between the parties involved and a *we-feeling* or a specific *consciousness* in whatever form evolves.

Although it adheres to the more open understanding proposed by Henningsen and Paasi, the subsequent analysis sometimes needs to use the term identity in lack of a catchy and generally accepted substitute within social sciences and in face of the fact that it is often used in the literature referred to.

The idea of conceptualising politics most suitably as a multi-level process is closely related to the impact of globalisation on both society in general and the political sphere in particular, the increase and diversification of political actors on the international, national and in particular the European scene. In that context, the political and steering patterns have changed remarkably and have initiated a scientific debate on these changes, which the term governance stands for.

Particularly the development of the European polity has inspired researchers and brought about the concept of multi-level governance that today has spread to many fields of political research and “contributed to reconnecting somewhat autonomous subfields in political science” (Enderlein/ Wälti/ Zürn, 2010: 1).

Multi-level governance has a tendency to emphasise decision-making, while regionalism focusses on the preconditions of identity formation. In agreement with Wunderlich, the subsequent study sees new regionalism and governance as perspectives, which complement each other:

“Thus, social constructivism complements agency-centred approaches (such as multi-level governance scholarship) by emphasising that the interests of the various actors participating in regional projects are not exogenously given. Neither are they static. They emerge and change together with regionalism. Social constructivism points, therefore, to the impact of particular political cultures, discourses etc. on the social construction of interests” (Wunderlich, 2007: 38).

In this setting, the subsequent chapter elaborates a comprehensive analytical framework for cross-border and transnational forms of cooperation that understands new regionalism and multi-level governance as complementary perspectives on one and the same process. This is particularly useful, as cross-border and transnational forms of cooperation are situated at the intersection of international and domestic politics, where not only different political systems but also different political cultures meet, where commonalities and differences crystallise and differences need to be overcome. To combine both new regionalism and governance takes the interconnectedness of the international system, policy formulation and implementation as well as the interaction with political actors and the impact on their identificatory background into account.

The following sections develop an analytical framework characterised by a fine balance between constructivist new regionalism and relevant governance approaches as

follows: In the subsequent chapter, I will give an introduction to regionalism and border studies (2.1) as well as governance (2.2). Then I will elaborate on the intersections of both debates (2.3) before I present research criteria (2.4) and give reasons for the cases selected, and an overview of the material consulted (2.5).

2.1 Regionalism and Border Studies

With regard to regionalism, literature differentiates predominately between old and new regionalism. The first phase of theory-building lasted approximately until the middle of the 1980s and was dominated by so-called 'old regionalism' that was formulated against the background of the experiences had during World War Two, and nationalism in the interwar-period (Söderbaum, 2003: 3-4).

These theories were basically developed parallel to the early steps of European unification and part of the comprehensive theoretical debate between liberalism, neofunctionalism and realism. These approaches are merely rooted in the conception of the international system as exclusively nation-state dominated with a clear differentiation between domestic and foreign affairs. They concentrate on topics like sovereignty, international relations as an anarchic system, the security dilemma, the potential *for* and effective long-term cooperation *between* nation states and aim at the development of a comprehensive approach. Lastly, old regionalism is embedded in a positivist tradition taking the nation-states and structures as given facts.

Neglecting non-state actors, the dynamics between actors and structures as well as the impact of globalisation on the nation state, old regionalism approaches were strongly criticised for their tendency to simplify the phenomenon of regionalism in the context of the *relational turn* (Wunderlich, 2007: 25). Inspired by social constructivism, theories of the second phase, although being rooted in old regionalism strived to take a more global as well as pluralistic perspective on the international level and increasingly emphasised the significance of norms, ideas and identity (Söderbaum, 2003: 4). As a consequence, new regionalism has, in general, a much broader disposition "being characterised by its multi-dimensionality, complexity, fluidity and non-conformity [...involving (M.S.)] a variety of state and non-state actors, who often come together in rather informal multi-actor coalitions" (Söderbaum, 2003: 1-2).

From that perspective, regions are to be seen as context-bound entities or an

“assemblage of proximate and distant social and political relationships, the scale and scope of which do not necessarily converge neatly around territories and jurisdictions formally administered or governed by the nation state” (Jonas, 2011: 263).

Consequently, a region in the sense of new regionalism may go across established administrative structures and has a much broader conceptualisation including both a wide range of state and non-state actors, covering a wide range of political issues and having both a top-down and bottom-up perspective.

In these ‘new’ multidimensional regionalisation processes, economic, political and social forces meet and create new collective norms, principles, identities and spaces on the regional level, for example through the “interlinking of several previously more or less secluded national markets into one functional economic unit” (Hettne/Inotai 1994: 11). Simultaneously, established interests, norms and identities are being changed through these processes. This also points to the ‘new’ in new regionalism: regarding ideational factors as a crucial aspect of region-building, new regionalism takes up an element that was widely neglected in the proceeding phase (Wunderlich, 2007: 36). According to the approaches of new regionalism, complex socio-historic internal processes and exogenous factors drive regional processes. Therefore, they pay more attention to the role of private actors, the influence of systemic factors, globalisation, integration and regionalism and acknowledge that the idea of a region is as much a social and a political construction as it is economically determined (Wunderlich, 2007: 36).

In a nutshell, new regionalism is of a ‘both...and’ character (Herrschel/Gore, 2006: 2), having the consequence that the analytical division between old and new regionalism in practice is often not as clear as the frequency of its application might suggest.

Söderbaum further argues that there is no such thing as *the* new regionalism but a broad range of theoretical approaches from different academic disciplines and sub-disciplines to be grouped under the umbrella of new regionalism, which illuminates different aspects of these processes (Söderbaum, 2003: 2). According to Söderbaum, all New Regionalism approaches share a broad concept of the actor on the international level and include – in varying nuances – the official foreign relations and social economic and political relations across national borders as a part of international relations. Furthermore, he identifies four clusters among new regionalism approaches

and groups them under the following keywords: (1) *critical and reflectivist*, (2) *global governance and problem solving*, (3) *constructivist* and (4) *poststructuralist* (Söderbaum, 2003: 16).²⁷

However, regionalism in general is often said to have a normative character not only as the term regionalism is mostly understood as referring to the “*ideas, identities and ideologies* related to a regional project” (Söderbaum, 2003: 7; original emphasis) but also as having the tendency generally to promote region-building and having little analytical value (Williams, 2007: 43).²⁸

Taking stock, we can state that new regionalism approaches have the tendency to put aspects into question that used to be longstanding given facts in political research. For example, asking for the real and not only the formal borders puts the actors and the existing bordering practices into focus.

Exactly these aspects of actors and borders are particularly stressed by the two most influential approaches of new regionalism used for research on regional activities in the Baltic Sea Region: the *New Region Building Approach* formulated by the Norwegian political scientist Iver B. Neumann and the *Institutionalisation of Regions* formulated by the Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi. The subsequent subchapters give more detailed insight into the main arguments of these two approaches.

²⁷ In his *Handbuch zur Europäischen Regionalismusforschung* Peter Schmitt-Egner provides different groupings of regionalisms. In the beginning he states that research on European Regionalism takes three perspectives (1) The ‘Neo-Regionalism-View’ (2) the ‘Regional Governance View’ and the (3) ‘transnational Regionalism-View’. Later on he differentiates between four regionalisms, two synchronous and two asynchronous. New and old regionalism are conceptualised as asynchronous, as new regionalism is a reaction to the deficiencies of old regionalism. In contrast, postmodern regionalism and transnational regionalism are synchronous features as they are not of a re-active character or passive towards globalisation but try to exert influence on these processes (Schmitt-Egner, 2005: 131-138). In the context of the argumentation of Herrschel/Gore and Söderbaum, these four latter differentiations appear to be rather artificial as they hardly reflect the multidimensionality of regional processes today.

²⁸ Williams further argues: „Im Wesentlichen konstatiert und postuliert er zugleich die im Entstehen begriffenen und als neu bezeichneten Regionen. Die zentrale Frage nach den Ursachen der Dynamik eines Regionalisierungsprozesses wird jedoch in erster Linie mit der Bildung eines Gegengewichtes zum Globalisierungstrend beantwortet“ (Williams, 2007: 43).

2.1.1 The New Region-building Approach

Neumann's conceptual starting point is the literature on nation-building. With reference to this process, he puts the genesis of a region in the focus of his research approach. He criticises the previous debate for taking the existence of a region for granted. In contrast to that, he understands region-building as the process of "how a region is constantly defined and redefined as a number of actors engage in a discourse which is never brought to a permanent standstill" (Neumann, 1992: 6; 1994: 59; 2003: 162).

With his concept, Neumann points to the limits of the hitherto existing debate and demands science to ask: "Who draws the line between inside and outside? Who takes it upon themselves to include and exclude, with what intentions, and what consequences?" (Neumann, 1992: 13; 2003: 162). In addition to that, he prompts scholars to reflect their own position within this process. According to him, the assumption that a scholar can draw back to a neutral analytical position is wrong, as the selection of research criteria or single cases is, from his perspective, basically a political action and thus a form of materialisation of power relations (Neumann, 2003: 162). Consequently, he regards his region-building approach as a means to explore the limits of the previous debate through a thorough analysis of the many different facets of the construction process. Including these questions in his approach, he moves away from the position of taking territorial entities as independent variables and puts the political actors, their identities, motives and interests and how these are evolved and influenced into focus (Neumann, 1992: 13). Finally, Neumann also asks the question: "is it possible to construct a region, as it were, ex nihilo?" His answer is "a principled yes" as it is always possible to find and construct arguments "to justify the inclusion of a certain actor in a certain region and so on" (Neumann, 2003: 176).

In a nutshell, Neumann puts his focus on the actor and his motives in the region-building process; he provides important basic questions to the researcher that help to detect power constellations, to understand the development of region-building processes, and to reflect the role of the researcher himself. In spite of providing guiding questions, the *New Region-building Approach* remains vague with regard to more concrete guidelines for investigation which makes its application for comparative research rather difficult - if not impossible.

Comparative research does not mean to lump all cases and criteria together, but to find out whether the criteria applied do matter and whether all criteria that matter are included. In so far, Neumann's approach still gives important impulses for comparative research, namely to be careful and critical, especially towards a harmonising historiography and the role of the researcher. However, being of a rather general character, Neumann's approach seems to be most suitably applied with in-depth case studies. Comparative research, in contrast, relies on certain common criteria in whatever form. The challenge for a comparative constructivist researcher then, is to find an approach that takes Neumann's arguments into account and to ensure comparability at the same time. In order to do so, the subsequent chapter widens the constructivist perspective on regions, introducing Paasi's *Institutionalisation of Regions*.

2.1.2 The *Institutionalisation of Regions*

In contrast to Neumann's general emphasis on the actor, its decisions and the role of science in region-building, Anssi Paasi's concept of an *institutionalisation of regions* gives comparably concrete insight into the different aspects and criteria he regards as important when doing research on regions. He analytically points to four aspects that stand for the various sides of the same process: "the formation of territorial, symbolic and institutional shapes of a region and its establishment as an entity in the regional system and social consciousness of the society concerned" (Paasi, 2001: 16).

(1) With regard to the *territorial shaping of a region*, Paasi directs the attention to the fact that borders are no fixed lines and that borders are not an exclusive element used in political geography, on the contrary, borders are "everywhere in a society, in diverging social practices and discourses." Moreover, they are perpetuated in other scales of the state as well. Paasi defines borders as

"social and practical constructs that are established by human beings for human – and clearly at times for very non-human – purposes and whose establishment is a manifestation of power relations and social division of labour" (Paasi, 2005: 27).

Accordingly, we find many different forms of boundaries, which are of different qualities; some more permeable some more rigid. These lines drawn by actors are the manifestation of specific purposes and a specific context and thus, an expression of power constellations within society. Borders may both separate and mediate between

different social spheres. Bearing this in mind, taking borders as a given fact hampers a thorough understanding of the process of the institutionalisation of a region as it excludes one of the basic decisions that regional actors have taken, namely who is in and who is out or, to speak in more relational terms, which processes lead to bordering decisions. In summary, Paasi argues in favour of a broader understanding of boundaries in a twofold sense. He calls on the researcher first of all not only to concentrate on political or social boundaries, and secondly to look for the “functions and meanings they have played in the construction of ‘territorial traps’ at various spatial scales” (Paasi, 2001: 16-17).

(2) Secondly, he points to the process of *symbolisation of a region* that establishes territorial symbols, such as the name of a region or a logo. Providing a condensed image of the idea of a region, these aspects are very important as they refer to the region’s core elements derived from both past and present, history and future visions as well as social life and culture (Paasi, 2009: 135).

(3) With regard to *institutional shaping*, Paasi comprises formal institutions such as a common form of organisation as well as local and non-local practices in politics, economy, jurisdiction or administration that further promote a collective awareness among people. He regards a region as established when they

“achieve a recognized position in the territorial structure and social consciousness. (...) However, some regions may have a strong cultural position and identity in the spatial consciousness of citizens (and outsiders) even if they do not have any formal role in territorial administrative structures. It is nevertheless usual that regions must become instruments in the struggle over social and economic power and resources, for instance in regional policy” (Paasi, 2001: 18).

In addition to that, Paasi argues that the institutionalisation of a region simultaneously affects the previous spatial order in the form of de/re-institutionalisation processes (Paasi, 2001: 18).

(4) After having reached an established – but not necessarily administrative status – through any continuation of the process of institutionalisation, the region becomes *part of the regional system and consciousness* in the respective society at the fourth stage (Paasi, 2001: 16; 1986: 121-130).

Up to here, it has become apparent that the terms space/spatial and territory are of central importance for Paasi’s approach. Paasi gives more details about his

understanding and the relation of these terms in his reflections on *Deconstructing spatial identity*. According to him, “all identity discourses at all spatial scales must include a temporal and a spatial element, often intertwined” (Paasi, 2001: 20). While the temporalisation of the community includes “the narratives and memories of the past, images of the present and often utopias for the future”, he conceptualises the spatial element as a continuum of territoriality and spatiality (Paasi, 2001: 20). According to Paasi “(t)erritoriality is an ideological practice and discourse that transforms national spaces and histories, cultures, economic success and resources into bounded spaces” (Paasi, 2011: 14). A bounded space then, in Paasi’s sense, corresponds to a relatively clearly delineable entity with relatively clear - not necessarily connected with physical geography - bordering practices and thereby a specific space of reference.

Providing a relatively clear understanding of territoriality, Paasi’s concept of spatiality remains relatively vague. It points in general more towards the reproduction of a regional entity in social practices with a less strong junction to territory, or to speak in Paasi’s terminology, a ‘less bounded space’. From that perspective, territoriality and spatiality stand for two extreme points on a long continuum, on which the researcher can indicate to which degree a region is bounded or unbounded.

In accordance with the logic of his approach, the four dimensions of the institutionalisation of regions are not assigned a specific degree of priority. Much more he provides an open research design that provides scope for the individual case’s specificities and its bordering practices.

In his article *‘Europe as a Social Process and Discourse – Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity,’* Paasi applies his concept to Europe and gives an overarching perspective on how Europe became a regional entity. Furthermore, he also conceptualises ‘Europe as a set of regions’ and points to the constructed character of the increasingly emerging regions in Europe:

“They exist at first perhaps in the namings, strategic definitions and proclamations of politicians, foreign policy experts and researchers, and may then be gradually transformed into representations on maps and texts (administrative areas, various ‘circles’, ‘bananas’, ‘learning regions’), and into sets of social (political, economic and administrative) institutions, practices and discourses. In spite of the fact that the expert-language of ‘region discourses’ may remain abstract for ordinary people, these ‘regions’ may finally have an effect on how people act in different situations and how they interpret and organize the mosaic of places, regions and boundaries that surrounds them” (Paasi, 2001: 13).

In this text passage, Paasi gives an idea of how the institutionalisation of regions could take place. Regarding cross-border and transnational forms of cooperation in Europe as a part of the Europe as a set of regions, one could argue that a focus on these gives a supplementary perspective from below to Paasi’s analysis of Europe.

In addition to that, regional actors in a cross-border context are urged to go beyond the sphere of nationalism where territoriality as a feature appears in its most distinctive form. Cross-border forms of cooperation are located at the intersection of many political levels and spaces, it will be of great interest to find out how regional actors handle these specificities.

Before I enter the governance debate in (2.2) I will give some insights into the connections between New Regionalism and Border Studies and a critical summary of the approaches presented.

2.1.3 Neumann, Paasi and Border Studies

Looking closely at New Regionalism approaches, it is hard not to come into contact with border studies, not least as Paasi’s *Institutionalisation of Regions* is often grouped among border studies too, and thus is a prime example for the increasing transgression of conceptual boundaries and transdisciplinarity. The next chapter first gives an introduction to border studies. Secondly, it identifies the focus on borders and bordering practices as the main intersections of Neumann’s and Paasi’s approaches and finally it argues that the differences between the institutionalisation of regions and the new region-building approach most clearly crystallise focussing on borders and bordering practices.

Both regionalism and border studies have been strongly influenced by the “relational turn” redirecting border studies to bordering and regionalism to region-building

activities so that the most interesting aspects for border studies today are the processes of how borders and regions are enacted, materialized and performed (Johnson et.al., 2011: 62). Relying on the application of bordering practices that often qualify the region to be cultural, political or functional, region-building and bordering practices can even be regarded as inseparably interwoven processes. This is also reflected in the fusing terrain of border research where it “is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish separate academic realms with their own objects, concepts or methods of border research” (Paasi, 2011: 18).

Thus, borders remain important aspects of research on region-building in general and cross-border and transnational region-building in particular. Borders are of a multi-scalar character as they are embedded into a certain – more or less clearly defined – hierarchy like the national administrative system and the European Union. And when local and regional actors decide to collaborate across these established borders they have specific interests and purposes, and actively – while maybe not consciously – participate in the process of re-arranging a regional context by establishing a new arena for cooperation for example. In accordance with Paasi, Scott regards bordering per se as a multi-level process of re-territorialisation as

“local institutions in border regions, though generally less powerful, are anything but passive: they are part of multiscalar politics and are reacting to national and supranational policies affecting them. This multilevel interaction generates a complex political-territorial environment in which cross-border cooperation must operate” (Scott, 2011: 135).

While Scott paints a very optimistic picture of the degree of activity in border regions, Liam O’Dowd points to the central aspects that substantiate heterogeneity in a border context:

“different experiences of border formation, and formal and informal cross-border relationships, along with the relative economic and political power of contiguous states and the role, if any played by external powers or regional ethnics and national questions” (O’Dowd, 2002: 30).

Consequently, the bordering practices applied by the political actors are of central significance in regional processes and are embedded in a multi-level context, composed of structural, procedural and identificatory elements.

Neumann’s *New Region-building Approach* and Paasi’s *Institutionalisation of Regions* have a specific focus on borders and bordering practices. While both agree on the

importance of bordering practices, their general perspective on the regional process is different. Regionalism takes a super-ordinate perspective of the regional process trying to figure out what actually defines a specific region. Border studies merely concentrate on the functions and qualities of a border itself on all social scales, be it political, social or cultural dividing lines.

However, both Paasi and Neumann share the idea that the genesis of a region is a consequence of targets and decisions of local or non-local actors and/or coalitions of individuals that are involved in this process. They share the emphasis on region-building or the institutionalisation of region as a process, as a regional entity is continuously reproduced through political, economic, cultural, administrative actions and social practices in general. They stress the continuous character of these processes, their interdependency and their strong contextual embeddings.

The main difference between both approaches is Neumann's emphasis on the political actor, his background, purposes and decisions while Paasi merely concentrates on the emerging structure and its specific dimensions. That way, both approaches can be regarded as mutually complementing. Their main contribution to the analytical framework of this study is, with regard to Neumann, his critical perspective on the facts often taken for granted. Paasi offers a perspective that enables us to see region-building as a very specific process composed of the different dimensions that may materialise in different intensities.

However, as both authors remain relatively silent with regard to specific research criteria, it appears to be reasonable to include governance (2.2) as a second theoretical perspective that provides more concrete criteria to be used for the development of a comparative research design. This appears even more reasonable as governance approaches explicitly try to handle multi-level settings.

2.2 Governance

Over the past 20 years, governance has become both one of the most often used and most debated terms in social science. During the last few years, criticism has been raised in political science, in particular about its lack with regard to content (Offe, 2009)²⁹, its effectiveness and efficiency (Grande, 2012)³⁰.

While Claus Offe and Edgar Grande doubtless point to crucial weaknesses in the overall debate, Gunnar Folke Schuppert proposes seeing governance as an 'enabling approach'. Being both (1) a key and (2) a meta concept, it provides very specific tools for scientific analysis.

(1) As a key concept, it marks a change in the perspective from government to governance and it widens the actor-centred perspective also including an institutional dimension. That way it helps to focus the debate on changing statehood and provides a way to handle these developments. Finally, it also encloses a process-oriented perspective and thus, an important contribution to the debate on accountability and legitimacy of new modes of government (Schuppert, 2011: 16-25; 45).

(2) As a meta-concept governance, it helps to strengthen the analytical competence, as it helps to focus on interrelations and interdependencies as well as on bordering practices. Moreover, it helps to analyse so-called governance regimes, which are the result of an increasing densification of government instruments and arrangements and facilitates the analysis of political decision-making processes in multi-level settings (Schuppert, 2011: 16-25; 46).

The subsequent analysis primarily takes up the idea of governance as a meta-concept; this conception provides significant intersections with other theoretical approaches

²⁹ Referring to its syntactic structure, semantics and pragmatics Claus Offe gives important and inspiring critical insight into the overall usage of the term in his article *Governance: An Empty Signifier?*. For him, governance is a "bridge concept" that is "employed to bridge and blur the differences that conventionally structure thought in social sciences" such as public/private, political/economical or domestic/international (Offe, 2009: 553). Moreover, he criticises the concept for being too fuzzy, following a harmonising rhetoric and having a depoliticising tendency.

³⁰ Apart from of a general stock-taking of the governance debate, Edgar Grande argues for a stronger historical conceptual basis, the reconsideration of specific, so far non-controversial assumptions (Grande, 2012: 571), a stronger focus on the concept's capacities and deficiencies, and a discussion on methodological problems that mainly derive from its strong contextual character. Having references to many other theories and concepts, Grande sees the largest challenge in overcoming its fragmented nucleus (Grande, 2012: 579).

used to analyse regional processes, particularly new regionalism. In contrast to Offe's and Grande's general critique, this study is based on the position that single approaches and threads of the governance debate are quite clear and provide an appropriate theoretical background for analysis and that specific weaknesses can be balanced through the combination with new regionalism approaches; they help to conceptualise governance as a dynamic process in a complex institutional setting, they help to abandon the idea that political goals are given and to replace it with the assumption that goals and preferences are being specified within processes and thus, are more a result than a precondition (Grande, 2012: 583).

Despite being closely interrelated, single threads of the scientific debate on governance are most frequently characterised by their frame of reference that label specific clusters: global governance, multi-level governance, urban governance, regional governance, network governance, business governance or corporate governance etc.

In the face of these many threads, it is useful to make an attempt to identify the nucleus of the term governance. According to Arthur Benz, governance in general is based on the presumption that political processes can be steered and regulated. That means that politics is neither exclusively determined by economic necessities or institutions nor does it correspond to the unlimited exertion of power. In that sense, governance points to the dynamic interaction between structures and processes, between institutions and actors, and between norms and their implementation etc. (Benz, 2004: 21). Furthermore, governance concentrates on the non-hierarchical production of public goods (Grande, 2012: 566) and processes that enable collective action among actors from different backgrounds and logics, to agree on conflict resolution and to safeguard interest reconciliation (Fürst, 2004: 48, footnote 6). As a consequence, governance goes across the established formal structures, and creates political spaces that are open for asymmetric and manifold actor constellations as well as informal exchange of ideas, negotiations and agreements (Grande, 2012: 566).

This dynamic understanding of political processes goes back to the increasing spread of a general 'spirit of democratisation' alongside globalisation that changes the preconditions for policy formulation and sets the trend towards new methods of policy-making and implementation both in the western world and beyond (Chhotray/Stoker 2009: 17). Thus governance can be regarded as closely connected to new modes of policy formulation that comprise two different tendencies: (1) new forms of public

management and (2) a general trend to decentralisation on the international and especially the European level.

New forms of public management primarily include the increasing transfer of public tasks such as the implementation of specific policies, programmes or the provision of services to semi-governmental institutions and private agencies. As a consequence, the state has become a differentiated, fragmented and poly-centred institutional complex connected by more or less formalised networks in which the dividing lines between state and society are increasingly blurred (Sørensen, 2006: 100). Numerous collective binding decisions today are made and implemented without state participation (Benz, 2004: 16-17) and a multitude of new instruments for the regulation of societal/social needs are being developed and are bundled under the umbrella of the concept of governance (Chhotray/Stoker, 2009: 17).

Consequently governance has - as new regionalism - a boundary crossing character both in the national and international context. However, amongst the multitude of governance approaches, not all seem appropriate to analyse cross-border cooperation processes. For example, urban governance is applied both to specific large cities and to agglomerations of city regions and focuses on finding new modes of how to regulate, design and organise life in an urban area. Depending on the individual case, urban governance may cover neighbourhood management, housing, cultural policy or transport infrastructure etc. However, urban governance conceptually remains within state borders, while often crossing domestic administrative boundaries in areas of common interest such as regional planning, transport infrastructure or education.

Conceptually, cross-border cooperation could also be localised within transnational governance that refers to forms of governance “that cross national boundaries at levels other than sovereign-to-sovereign” (Hale/Held, 2011b: 4). Yet, de facto transnational governance institutions have a more global and sector-oriented focus. From both the institutional and the historical background, multi-level and regional governance provide a more appropriate tool to analyse cross-border forms of urban area cooperation. Particularly the idea of a *Europe of Regions* and the perception of the ever increasing significance of cities and city regions for regional development has gained ground in the context of increasing Europeanisation since the 1970s, having the consequence that sub-state entities in form of cities and regions have developed far-reaching activities in the field of international, transnational and cross-border

cooperation.³¹ Therefore, the subsequent chapter focuses on multi-level and regional governance and their contribution to a comprehensive analytical approach for cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region.

2.2.1 Multi-level Governance

Being explicitly linked to European Integration and having an inherent nation-state border-crossing dimension, cross-border and transnational forms of cooperation are most suitably localised within multi-level governance; not least because multi-level governance is open for the manifold linkages between the national, regional and local level. Today, nation-states are both objects and subjects in European policy-making. Similarly, local and regional municipalities and even forms of cross-border cooperation have been developing instruments that enable them not only to be exposed to, but to participate in policy-making. Even if the national frame of reference remains important for the positions of national governments,

“sub-national governments are no longer nested exclusively within states. They have created dense networks of communication and influence that link them with supranational institutions and with sub-national governments in other countries” (Hooghe/Marks, 2001: 89).

As a consequence

“National governments do not monopolize links between domestic and European actors. In this perspective, complex interrelationships in domestic politics do not stop at the international state but extend to the European level. The separation between domestic and international politics, which lies in the heart of the state-centric model is rejected by the multi-level governance model” (Hooghe/Marks, 2001: 4).

Accordingly, the scope of action for sub-state entities today goes far beyond the framework literally provided by national constitutions. The numerous representations of regions and cities established in Brussels are an empirical indicator for the fact that the delimitation between domestic and foreign affairs are increasingly being blurred (Marks/Hooghe/Blank, 1996: 346-347; Wunderlich, 2007: 31).

³¹ While there is general agreement among governance scholars that statehood is re-defined in these processes, the extent and the quality of the changes remain controversial (Chhotray/Stoker, 2009: 47-48).

Research on governance in the European Union concentrates on political processes, procedures, instruments and preconditions for policy formulation and implementation, and actor constellations. On the other hand, it turns its attention to aspects of system transformation both on the European and the nation-state level, and its consequences on problem-solving capacity and democratic accountability (Chhotray/Stoker, 2009: 20) as the capacity to take decisions today is no longer a monopoly of the nation-state but dispersed on several levels of decision-making: the sub-national, the national and the supranational level (Kohler-Koch/Rittberger, 2006: 34).

According to Hooghe and Marks there are two ideal types of *multi-level governance*.³² Type (I) has its historical roots in the idea of federalism and concentrates predominately on the relation between central state and other subordinated but among themselves independent sub-state governments. This approach is mainly oriented towards super-ordinate goals and tries to grasp the change but not the end of the nation state through the evolution of transnational movements, *public-private partnerships* and multinational or transnational firms (Hooghe/Marks, 2003: 236-237; 2010: 18-20). For type (I) governance they identify four criteria: (1) general purpose jurisdictions, (2) non-intersecting memberships, (3) limited number of jurisdictional levels and (4) a system-wide durable architecture.

According to them, cross-border cooperation as it can be observed in North America and Europe belongs to type (II)³³, that distributes administrative competences among different levels, that have a different and potentially also overlapping territorial background and that due to that, are more of a network character. The responsibility of type (II) institutions is functionally oriented, which means that they serve specific aims and they have to be able to react flexibly to specific demands (Marks/Hooghe, 2010: 20-22).

³² As Hooghe and Marks reveal in their article *Unravelling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance* that the content of their approach is a résumé of “research in local government, federalism, European integration, international relations and public policy” (Hooghe/Marks, 2003: 241). This focused recapitulation of research approaches on multi-level governance has experienced wide academic reception.

³³ Perkmann also groups Euroregions among type (II) structures as “they focus on cross-border policy coordination as their specialist task; they involve members drawn from various different jurisdictions; and they are flexibly designed to respond to their policy mandate. It follows that organisation building will be an essential part of the emergence of such type II governance structures” which is especially required in an EU context (Perkmann, 2007b: 865)

The fact that type (II) forms of multi-level governance are embedded in type (I) architecture may have far-reaching consequences for policies within the specific governance arrangement and for policies formulated on a super-ordinated level directed towards this level:

“(C)oooperation is difficult when regions and local authorities in different countries have dissimilar competencies and resources. This has constrained one of the European Commission’s best-known programs, Interreg, which aims to facilitate inter-regional networks along the EU’s internal and external borders (Hooghe/Marks, 2010: 25).”

Hooghe and Marks even explain different developments of cross-border cooperations referring to the differences in multi-level governance type (I) architecture.³⁴ However, conceptualising type (II) as embedded in type (I) also indicates that changes in type (I) structures will probably have an impact on the forms of cooperation and coordination in the type (II) architecture.

In addition to that, the three basic biases that Hooghe and Marks identify with regard to type (II) governance, ask for a thorough analysis. The first bias sees type (II) forms of governance as extrinsic communities that are instrumental arrangements for solving ad hoc coordination problems in a very specific geographical context, ideational foundations for cooperation are very thin (Marks/Hooghe, 2010: 24/25).³⁵

(2) Due to its instrumental character, there is a tendency for members to exit the regional arena when these no longer serve their needs. Finally, Type (II) jurisdictions are not able to resolve strong conflicts but are “well suited for decisions characterized by a search for pareto-optimality decision making” (Marks/Hooghe, 2010: 25) due to their limited political assertiveness. This predisposition reduces the tendency of the exchange of ideological differences, and favours concentration on improving efficiency.

The main critique raised on multi-level governance is its strong informal character, as decision-making takes place through open or multi-sectoral negotiation processes in which actors participate on equal footing and join their resources. This has rather

³⁴ In that context they again point to Joachim Blatter, who in 2001 identified the tendency that cross-border arrangements in Europe show a tendency to evolve in a Type (I) direction – under the influence of relatively resource-rich, general purpose local and regional governments (Hooghe, Marks, 2010: 25).

³⁵ While pointing to the significance of common values in Type (I) forms of governance, Hooghe and Marks regard type (II) as concentrating on the resolution of common problems. In contrast Joachim Blatter showed in a comparative study that cross-border cooperation can be based both on ideals and instrumental needs (Blatter, 2000: 41).

ambiguous consequences for the question of democratic legitimacy. The advantages and disadvantages of this informality are on the one hand the flexibility to react to new problems, the ability to circumvent blocking situations and to demonstrate public agency, but on the other hand there is the danger of by-passing parliamentary and legal control (Jachtenfuchs/Kohler-Koch, 2004: 94-95).

Concluding, Hooghe and Marks' approach appears to be rather structure-oriented and focused on the current state. Actors and processes play a more subordinated role. With their focus on structures, they provide a tool to grasp these while leaving aside how these evolve, by whom they are initiated and why. Still, a comprehensive research approach demands combining this focus on structures with an actor and process-centred perspective.

2.2.2 Regional Governance

Regional governance has its conceptual origins in the economy of institutions and global governance. Regional governance develops in general where state and societal actors identify a need for more coordination than the traditional administrative structures provide. According to Fürst, the demand for regional governance and the degree of its development depends on the specific circumstances in the respective society: it is strongest where the regional level is weakly organised and where 'equifunctional' structures are perceived as insufficient to compensate these shortcomings (Fürst, 2004: 46).

In that context, it is no surprise that Fürst empirically sees the early beginnings of regional governance in Great Britain and England where the regional level is traditionally rather weak and where EU accession in the 1970s made it necessary to establish capable regional structures in order to successfully participate in the EU-structural funds (Fürst, 2006: 37-39; 2004: 46).

Fürst divides the process of developing regional governance structures into three stages: (1) during the initial phase, it is important to identify a need for common action, to organise support within the region and to organise the start of the process of regional governance. (2) In the planning phase, it is important to try to organise the collective process as effectively as possible, while keeping motivation of the people involved as high as possible in order to reach good results. (3) In the third phase, actors

commit themselves to cooperation and become lead partners for single projects. According to Fürst, regional governance begins with issue-based or project-based initiatives (Fürst, 2004: 53-54) but then has to result in a wider temporal horizon than a singular project and a super-ordinate dimension, bundling single projects within the regional context (Fürst, 2004: 50; 2006: 43).

In agreement with Hooghe and Marks, Fürst refers to the importance of the evolution of these regional structures but also includes their impact and deficiencies as well as their consequences on the actors' strategic background and paradigmatic means of interaction (Fürst, 2006: 41). Fürst maintains that governance is less about actors and processes and more about systems of rules and the steering of collective action through paradigmatic changes in the actors' system of action. That way, the establishment of regional governance primarily takes a medium- or even long-term perspective, concentrating on the developments in the actors' considerations leading to a common decision.

Against this background he identifies five core elements of regional governance: (1) regional governance is the *management of interdependencies* in the face of the single actors' differing logics of action. As regional governance constellations are often based on diverse actors, they have to handle their different strategic backgrounds, e.g. politicians are mainly determined by elections and power, economic actors by profit maximisation and market, and social actors by social recognition and solidarity (Fürst, 2006: 38). While politicians are embedded in administratively delimited spaces, societal and economic actors are functionally oriented, cooperating with those who contribute best to problem solution (Fürst, 2006: 38). These different strategic backgrounds have to be taken into account when the actors see (2) a *need for common decision* and action.

The different background of the involved parts is also the reason why forms of regional governance are mostly (3) *weakly institutionalised* networks that are based on conventions, traditions and common rules. Generally, there are no formal means to enforce the implementation of common decisions, as cooperation is voluntary and it is very easy to exit cooperation (Fürst, 2004: 55). (4) Against that background and in the face of the *non-hierarchical* relations within regional governance, decision-making appears more as a specific mode of coordination, (5) whereas consensus is achieved through *negotiation and paradigmatic steering*, this means the impact on the regional

actors' attitudes and patterns of thought caused by this new level of interaction (Fürst, 2006: 43-44). In this manner, he points to the aspect of how the established rules interact with their originators and how they potentially change their basis for decision through the evolution of a certain sense of community or we-feeling.

Regional governance has a strong informal dimension, personalities and personal networks are very important in these weakly institutionalised contexts; thus, structures of preliminary decision dominated by single actors may develop (Fürst, 2004: 57).³⁶

Nevertheless, once established regional governance is a relatively stable form of cooperation and coordination across administrative boundaries. From that perspective, cross-border or transnational forms of cooperation can be regarded as special cases of regional governance, including sub-state and regional entities respectively, located in different nation states. Fürst's argument that regional governance primarily occurs where the regional level is weakly organised (Fürst, 2004: 47), counts especially for cross-border regions, as they are rooted in different nation states and in different administrative systems and lack a traditional common institutional background.³⁷

Although regional governance is formulated with a focus on the sub-state level within a nation-state, it points to many important aspects that are of significance in a cross-border context, too. The asymmetric and diverging actor constellations seem to produce similar problems in different intensities. However, some difficulties such as asymmetric competencies or cultural and linguistic barriers tend to be more frequent in a cross-border context.

2.2.3 Multi-level vs. Regional Governance

Both governance approaches selected differ widely with regard to their level of abstraction, their focus and their potential contribution for the analytical design of the study. Hooghe and Marks' approach has been developed during a period of over more than two decades and has thereby come to a comparably high level of abstraction. It

³⁶ However, preliminary decision structures do not principally undermine the democratic process through exclusivity and selectivity as far as output-legitimacy is also taken into account (Fürst, 2006: 53).

³⁷ Still, cross-border forms of regional governance in Europe take a specific position in this context, as the European Union as a supranational level provides funding, rules and priorities through the INTERREG programme.

provides clear research criteria to investigate the structural elements of multi-level governance. With structure, they refer to the specific rules, which are established to govern and which compose the framework within which one governs.

Due to the fact that regional governance is a relatively new strand in the governance debate, Fürst's proceeding is more inductive and his contribution in general is of a more sketchy character. Still, or maybe due to that perspective, Fürst focuses on different aspects. He emphasises the importance of the political actor in the predominately informal processes of regional governance. Moreover, with his focus on how governance develops, how things are done within such a framework and which methods are being used in regional governance, he combines both a procedural and a structural perspective. Yet, with his strong references to Hooghe and Marks with regard to structural aspects, both approaches show remarkable intersections.

Taken together, multi-level and regional governance provide criteria to investigate the interrelations between both the actor, the structure and the process of how regional forms of cooperation develop. The next chapter will combine these criteria with the debated new regionalism approaches and will develop the comprehensive research design in detail.

2.3 Regionalism and Governance

This chapter on regionalism and governance gives an overview of the main characteristics of the super-ordinate theoretical approaches discussed in the preceding chapters. Firstly, the purpose is to contrast *old regionalism* and *new regionalism* in order to illustrate the basic changes within the regionalism debate. Secondly, the aim is to highlight the new and innovative contribution of new regionalism and governance to the scientific discourse by contrasting it with old regionalism. Finally, the aim is to show that new regionalism and governance, irrespective of their different origins and foci, are relatively close in the way they conceptualise central aspects of the political sphere, and that referring to both provides the opportunity to develop a comprehensive research approach including both systemic and cultural aspects.

Table 1 gives a contrasting overview of the *Central Aspects of Old Regionalism, New Regionalism and Governance Theory* in general. The first column indicates the central defining criteria for these three different theoretical approaches. The table's rows juxtapose the single approaches' different understandings.

While regionalism has its *origin* in international relations theory, governance goes back to policy analysis, research on federalism, the need for new forms of public management and the attempts to give European Integration a theoretical background.

The conception of the political *actor* gives important insight about the general orientation of the single approaches. While old regionalism regards nation-states, both as unitary actors and the only relevant actors in the international scene, new regionalism and governance agree that states are fragmented actors composed of different actors, on different scales and with different interests. Regional governance adds the potential importance of personalities in a weakly institutionalised context. In addition to that, non-state actors are regarded as becoming increasingly important. Accordingly, *actor constellations* in old regionalism exclusively rely on nation states and are of symmetric character, while they can be both symmetric and asymmetric in new regionalism and governance.

Table 1: Central Aspects of Old Regionalism, New Regionalism and Governance Theory

	<i>Old Regionalism</i>	<i>New Regionalism</i>	<i>Governance</i>
<i>Origin</i>	International Relations	International Relations	Policy analysis, federalism, new public management, European Studies
<i>Actors</i>	Nation-states as unitary actors	State as a fragmented actor, non-state actors	State as a fragmented actor, non-state actors; actors as personalities (regional governance)
<i>Actors' constellation</i>	Symmetric	A/symmetric	A/symmetric
<i>Actors' interests</i>	As given facts	To be re-/formulated within a process	As given facts/ process-formulated
<i>Decision-making rule</i>	Consensus	Consensus	Consensus
<i>Compliance mechanisms</i>	Formal sanctions	Self-commitment	Self- commitment
<i>Bordering practice</i>	Clearly separable political arenas	Networked political space	Networked political space
<i>Steering patterns</i>	Top-down, government, hierarchical	Bottom-up/top-down, governance, non-hierarchical, consensus	Bottom-up/top-down, governance, non-hierarchical, consensus
<i>Object of investigation</i>	Cooperation in the international system	Region-building in the international system	Policy formulation and implementation
<i>Perspective of investigation</i>	Structure-centred	Actor-centred	Structure-centred
<i>Dynamics</i>	Stability	Flexibility	Flexibility

Another important aspect is how the single theoretical considerations deal with the *actors' interests*. Old regionalism takes the actors' interests as a given fact, while new

regionalism regards them as the result of an ongoing process. Governance theory in contrast seems to be open in both directions. While Hooghe and Marks treat the interests as given facts, Fürst admits that they may change in the context of ongoing regional governance processes. All three approaches indicate consensus as the main *rule of decision-making*.

Compliance mechanisms refer to the way in which the implementation of decisions can be safeguarded. Old regionalism applies classical sanctions in cases of non-adherence while new regionalism and governance emphasise the importance of informal commitment to common decisions. Lacking formal sanction mechanisms, new regionalism and governance are merely built upon loyalty, whereas sanction mechanisms are formally agreed upon in old regionalism approaches.

The *bordering practice* refers to the question to what extent a cooperation is or can be delimited; is it easy to become a member? Is there a clear symmetric member-structure? or is it more network-like, e.g. implementing the principle of a variable geography³⁸?

The *steering patterns* show how political power is exercised. Is steering conducted via classical hierarchical mechanisms or is steering open to bottom-up initiatives based on self-negotiated systems of rules as well as voluntary commitment and consensus? While old regionalism stands for top-down steering mechanisms, governance and new regionalism are open to both initiatives from below and above.

The *object of investigation* indicates which phenomenon the approach is focused on, while the *perspective of investigation* shows whether the specific approach concentrates on political-administrative structures or on political actors. Old regionalism traditionally tries to explain international cooperation, focussing on the structures in the international system, whereas new regionalism concentrates on how regions come into being and on the political actors and their role within that process. Governance has both a structural and policy-oriented perspective, analysing policy formulation and implementation as embedded in a specific institutional framework.

³⁸ The principle of a *variable geography* means that not all members necessarily have to participate in all projects and issues.

Finally, it is of great interest to find out how the single approaches relate to *dynamics*, i.e. old regionalism stresses stability, while governance and new regionalism emphasise flexibility within regional cooperation.

As table 1 shows, old regionalism conceptually takes a rather clear form, i.e. with clear actor structures and clear separable political arenas. Following a more comprehensive strategy, governance and new regionalism include the aspects of old regionalism while also reflecting the increasing complexity in international relations and decision-making processes, including non- and sub-state actors, non-hierarchical steering patterns and emphasising the network-like character of political space.

Due to its rather narrow understanding of the political actor, cross-border forms of cooperation are conceptually not included in old regionalism. Thus, the following comparison concentrates on new regionalism and governance approaches.

The major difference between new regionalism and governance in general is their direction of impact. While new regionalism concentrates on the process of how, why and from whom structures in an international context evolve, governance takes these structures as the given framework within which decisions are taken. Governance concentrates on policy formulation and implementation, while not neglecting that these relatively stable structures may change. Both approaches taken together provide a tool for understanding governance against its dynamic and complex background.

Neumann gives us general methodological hints, e.g. to be aware of the researcher's role within the process of research, to avoid a harmonising reading and to remain critical with regard to established variables and concepts, and provides the idea of keeping the concept as open as possible. Paasi provides us with a more systematic constructivist perspective that helps to identify four central aspects of a regional process. Moreover, multi-level governance gives us a specific perspective of the relevant structures for the region-building process, while regional governance combines both structural and procedural elements with the significance of the individual political actor.

The attempt here is to balance the weaknesses of the single approaches by developing a comprehensive research design in the next chapter.

2.4 Research Design

The precedent chapters have shown that transnational and cross-border cooperation can theoretically be conceptualised as a sphere where new regionalism and governance meet. In some respects, new regionalism and governance share conceptions, while they are of complementary character in others. The aim of the following section is not to develop a deterministic research design but to develop an analytical framework for the research of cross-border and transnational forms of cooperation recurring to both Paasi's, Neumann's, Hooghe/Marks' and Fürst's approaches. Due to its more general character, Neumann's *New Region-building Approach* is not included in the development of the specific research criteria but gave the idea of keeping the research design as open as possible in order to understand the comprehensive dynamic of an interactive multi-dimensional regional process where clear causalities can hardly be found.

New regionalism provides us, with reference to Neumann and Paasi, with a focus on the actors and the process of cooperation across boundaries. Using Paasi's institutionalisation of a region enables us to differentiate between single dimensions of the region-building process and thereby to identify the single cases' specificities. In addition to that, the governance approach helps to explore policy formulation within the specific form of regional cooperation and further pursuit of the formulated interests.

In order to safeguard a certain degree of comparability while simultaneously taking the specificities of the single theoretical approaches into account, the path chosen here is a compromise between the openness characterising new regionalism and the more deterministic perspective of governance. The basic idea is not to neglect the specific criteria provided by governance but, instead of a classical operationalisation, to transform them into guiding questions for the subsequent analysis. In that manner, comparability is achieved by asking the same questions to the selected cases while providing enough scope for the peculiarities of the single case in the search for individual answers. In order to find out how cross-border forms of cooperation evolve and develop, I will formulate specific research questions in the subsequent section.

Table 2: Research Criteria provided by New Regionalism and Governance

	New Regionalism	Governance		
	<i>Institutionalisation of regions</i>	<i>Multi-level governance</i>		<i>Regional governance</i>
		<i>Type (I)</i>	<i>Type (II)</i>	
<i>Territorial shaping</i>	Borders as social constructs and manifestations of interests and power constellations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-intersecting membership • Limited number of jurisdictional levels • System-wide durable architecture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersecting membership • Many jurisdictional levels • Flexible design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actors as embedded in their home institutions (following different logics). • Horizontal interaction • Intersecting responsibilities • Transgression of existing borders, competences and responsibilities
		Type II is embedded in Type I, Type II may develop towards Type I		Embedded in existing institutions that have a ponderable impact on regional governance
<i>Symbolic shaping</i>	Symbolisation (logos, slogans)	Mutually inclusive identities but not so strong in cross-border contexts		Social capital; sense of community
<i>Institutional shaping</i>	Rules and structures made to govern the cooperation forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General purpose jurisdiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task-specific jurisdictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task specific forms of cooperation • Self-organised networks • Individually negotiated systems of rules • Learning is important • Arguing and negotiating leading to consensus
<i>Contextual perception</i> ³⁹	Established entity in the regional system and society			

³⁹ Paasi's original terminology is "part of the regional system and consciousness" (Paasi, 2001: 16).

Table 2 on *Research Criteria provided by New Regionalism and Governance* gives the basis on which the more specific research questions were formulated. Basically, the criteria originating from Governance theory were grouped according to the four aspects of Paasi's *Institutionalisation of Regions* in the first column, while the notes in the second column give a summary of the content of these four aspects.

Labelled in accordance with the first column and each referring to one of the table's rows, the subsequent chapters make transparent how the more specific research questions were developed. This division is made for analytical reasons in order to make the theoretical background of the study more concise. The analysis will not least show that the single dimensions of the overall process of the institutionalisation of regions are closely interrelated and often hard to differentiate.

Finally, the table also displays the specific conceptual contribution of Paasi's institutionalisation of regions to the research design, as most interestingly, none of the other approaches referred to the significance of the external perception.

2.4.1 Territorial Shaping

Paasi understands territorial shaping as the materialisation of formal and informal bordering practices, reflecting the most dominant interests and power constellations. Against that background, it is important to analyse the institutional background composed of the bordering practices applied by the single actors and their context.

A general contextualisation tries to capture the basic conditions for and their influence on regional cooperation. For example, the competences of sub-state entities, their tasks and budget are most often defined on the national level. Variations in the respective institutional design may have consequences on the quality and intensity of cooperation and have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, it is central also to include the latest developments both with regard to international and domestic structures. This includes, for example, changes in regional development policy, changes in competences of single actors and also other relevant current debates such as the Europe of regions and the paradigm change from locational competition to regional competition.

Moreover, single actors can have diverse interests and strongly diverging interests, for example due to their different institutional background.⁴⁰ Consequently, it is of basic importance to investigate the distinctive interest constellations and the actors' specific logic of action.

The research questions formulated in order to explore the territorial shaping are:

- What are the specificities of the background of the single actor?
- To what degree do the actors involved have symmetric competences?
- Do member structures overlap?

Summarising, territorial shaping helps to detect the specific strategic background and preconditions for the decisions taken.

2.4.2 Symbolic Shaping

Symbolic shaping is important as the symbols chosen reflect the basic idea of a region, which is both a reference to the past, the present and the future of the region. The way in which a regional 'we-feeling' develops can have far-reaching consequences for a cross-border cooperation and the way it is also returned to the home institution and potentially also brought to third institutions. It is worthwhile finding out whether this regional reference point is perpetuated in regional discourses and overlapping membership of actors in different networks of regional relevance, and also whether and to what extent the transnational and the cross-border perspective is of importance within the home institutions.

The function of territorial symbols such as slogans, logos or a sense of community in these contexts is at least twofold. First, they help to formulate the central contents of regional cooperation and secondly, they help to communicate the organisational self-understanding and to integrate the specific form of regional cooperation into social consciousness.

The research questions formulated in order to explore symbolic shaping are:

- What role do identity-related elements like symbols or slogans play?
- In what contexts are these symbolic elements reflected?

⁴⁰ For example, local politicians have the tendency to be more territorially or locally and cooperatively oriented while organisations or entrepreneurs are more functionally, respectively supra-regionally and competitively oriented.

- Has a regional we-feeling evolved?

Concluding, symbolic shaping explores whether and to what extent the parties involved have developed a common understanding of the respective form of cooperation.

2.4.3 Institutional Shaping

Paasi understands institutional shaping in a relatively classical sense, as the rules and structures made to govern the cooperation forum. Establishing an institutional structure is also perceived as being closely interlinked with bordering practices, i.e. when it comes to the question of membership. As regional cooperation is mainly institutionalised through regular interaction, institutional structures can be both of formal and informal character. Thus, it can comprise both a common formally codified form of organisation and also simple forms of interaction, perpetuating the regional reference.

Research questions with regard to institutional shaping are:

- What rules and structures have been made to govern the cooperation forum?
- Does the forum serve specific tasks or general purposes?
- How are decisions implemented?
- Who belongs to the institution and why?
- What role does learning play?

In a nutshell, institutional shaping highlights according to which rules and to what end the forum was established.

2.4.4 Contextual Perception

With contextual perception, the table includes an aspect that is exclusively provided by Paasi's *Institutionalisation of Regions*. When a region becomes part of the regional system and consciousness in the respective society, it has to be reflected in, for example, documents, the media or policies. Conversely, this means that if a region is not perceived by its surroundings, it can not be regarded as fully institutionalised.

The research questions with regard to the contextual perception include:

- Does the environment perceive the regional forum for cooperation?
- Has the cross-border forum become part of the regional system and society?

In this manner, contextual perception tries to find out whether a cooperation forum is an isolated feature of specialised persons or whether it has become a relevant part of the public discourse.

2.4.5 Analytical Framework

Generally, the aim of this study is not to test a specific theoretical approach, but to find out how and why urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation develop in the Baltic Sea Area. Therefore, I have developed an analytical framework that is based on the presented new regionalism approaches formulated by Paasi and Neumann and governance approaches developed by Hooghe/Marks and Fürst.

Neumann's contribution derives from his critical perspective on positivist research taking specific aspects for granted. Although it is surely a difficult task to conduct research in a strict Neumann-style, the idea of keeping the analytical framework as open as possible and to take the single actor's decisions into account goes back to his argumentation. Paasi directs attention to the fact that regional processes may have different dimensions and that these different dimensions may be of different importance in the specific case. Thereby, he offers an analytical tool that enables exploring the specificities of, and in a second step comparing the relevance of these dimensions in the single case. Hooghe and Marks provide a specific focus on the structures of the single case studies, both with regard to the cross-border cooperation itself and the contextual structures it is localised in. Fürst additionally widens their perspective adding the relevance of procedures and individual political actors.

Finally, Table 3 gives a comprehensive *Overview of the Guiding Research Questions* formulated in chapter 2.4, describing the research design for the subsequent analysis.

Asking these questions, the subsequent study tries to disentangle the complex interplay of socio-historic internal processes and exogenous factors in region-building. Moreover, it aims to point to parallels between the single selected cases and to identify factors and measures that hinder or further regional cooperation across nation-state borders.

Table 3: Overview of the Guiding Research Questions

<p><i>General question:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How do urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation evolve and develop?</i> 	
<i>Territorial shaping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the specificities of the background of the single actor? • To what degree do the actors involved have symmetric competences? • Do member structures overlap? • To what extent are established borders transgressed?
<i>Symbolic shaping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role do identity related elements like symbols or slogans play? • In what contexts are these symbolic elements reflected? • Has a regional we-feeling evolved?
<i>Institutional shaping</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What rules and structures have been made to govern the cooperation forum? • Does the forum serve specific tasks or a general purpose? • How are decisions implemented? • Who belongs to the institution and why? • What role does learning play?
<i>Contextual perception</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the environment perceive the regional forum for cooperation? • Has the cross-border forum become part of the regional system and society?

2.5 Case selection, Methodology and Material

Cross-border cooperation across the Baltic Sea, just like all over Europe, takes many different forms and is characterised by many overlapping structures. This great variety makes the selection of empirical cases an important aspect in a research design.

The Baltic Sea Region is most often conceptualised as a region of cities (Åberg, 1998: 203; Herrschel/Newmann, 2002; Nilsson, 2003: 232-233). Taking up this focus on cities and city regions, case selection first concentrated on city-based cross-border forms of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. As these cases included small and medium-sized cities like Haparanda and Tornio as well as metropolises like Copenhagen, the idea was to strengthen the analytical value, concentrating on the cross-border cooperation of large urban areas. These share specific similar features with regard to, for example, their strategic position, both nationally and internationally as well as their size or their financial and administrative capacity.

Around the Baltic Sea, there are three cases of cross-border cooperation that include large urban areas. These are the southwest Oresund region, including the core-cities Copenhagen and Malmö, the GO-Region in the west, including the core cities Oslo and Gothenburg, and the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn in the north-east.

The subsequent comparative analysis uses qualitative methodology and is based on strategic documents, official publications, academic literature and other contributions to regional discourses, such as relevant popular science publications or newspaper articles. In order to weight the material and to generate deeper background information, 35 semi-structured expert interviews with both participants in and observers of cross-border cooperation, were conducted between June 2009 and May 2011. These interviews were accompanied by and summarized in form of handwritten notes; their transcription is included in the study's electronic appendix.

Finally, this study claims not to be neutral. Doing interviews, interpreting material, formulating questions, etc. is always an act of selection, of inclusion and exclusion and can in the end, despite all attempts to be as transparent as possible, hardly be entirely separated from the researcher's academic and personal background.

3. Urban-based Cross-border Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and its International Context

Limited space has been one of the main challenges of cities for centuries. While the Medieval city tried to handle this issue by successively enlarging its city walls, the strategy today is either formal incorporation or the establishment of informal, negotiation-oriented and often issue-based partnerships with the surrounding area. The aim of both approaches basically is to overcome the gap between formal administrative and functional boundaries.

In some specific cases like the Oresund Region, the Gothenburg-Oslo Region and the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn this surrounding area is additionally divided by a nation-state border - a challenge that the players in all three cases have to respond to. The subsequent chapter explores the single cases in search for commonalities, differences and explanations for their individual development.

In order to structure this piece of research, I have decided to conduct the case studies in three separate chapters: the Oresund region (4), the GO-region (5) and the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn (6). Then I provide a comparative analysis (7) and some conclusions in chapter 8.

The subsequent empirical section of this piece of research provides insight and answers to the research questions developed in chapter 2. First of all, it discovers overarching aspects of the territorial shaping for cross-border cooperation, namely the specificities of the international context of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. This comprises, first and foremost, the European Union and Nordic cooperation, their policies and strategies towards the Baltic Sea Region and their translation into concrete action such as programmes that provide funding for cross-border cooperation.

This chapter of more general significance is followed by the single case studies that follow the same basic structure. (1) Firstly, they provide further historic background information on the regional process. (2) Then, institutional shaping, which means the organisational arrangement of the political cross-border organisation comes into focus. (3) Thirdly, the territorial background of the member organisations in form of the respective local government systems is investigated, before (4) it discovers the single member organisations' strategic documents with respect to the strategic relevance of

the cross-border perspective in their strategic documents but also with reference to the expert interviews. (5) Fifthly, they give insight into the contextual perception of the respective cross-border organisation, (6) the significance and form of symbolic shaping processes and finally, a preliminary conclusion that summarises the crucial aspects of the single cases. The final step then, is to bring the results of the case studies together and provide an answer to the overarching research question of how urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation evolve and develop, and whether there are preconditions and/or measures that hinder or further such forms of cooperation.

Cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region is embedded in a multi-level context. This multi-level context includes the domestic preconditions within the respective nation state, the European level as well as the relations and dynamics between them. These structures again are neither fixed nor pre-given but the result of political interactions and premises of the course of time. The aim of the following section is to detect a specific aspect of territorial shaping, namely the international context of cross-border forms of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. Thus, the next chapter refers to the two most important political institutions with a specific focus on regional policy: the European Union and the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM).

Accordingly, this chapter provides a general overview of the EU's and NCM's strategies and policies towards the Baltic Sea Region. That way, I explore the super-ordinate political background for cross-border cooperation, which later on is translated into operative regional policies and programmes and implemented through single projects on the regional and local level.

3.1 The EU, Regions and the Baltic Sea

While Denmark had become a member of the European Communities (EC) in 1973, it was primarily the fall of the Iron Curtain that paved the way for the membership applications by Sweden, Norway and Finland⁴¹ and later on by Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. That way, the European Union got a central role in the process of building a region that had been characterised by the great power overlay of the Cold War for decades.

Vice versa, the Nordic countries entered a European Union that had been strongly influenced by the idea of a “Europe of Regions”. This concept had become increasingly popular during the 1980s and has widely been used by regional politicians of all stripes in their effort for more rights for the regions within European political architecture. Even if the term appears to be outdated today – the concept has made its way into the EU’s political culture, contributed to the self-consciousness of sub-state actors and helped to turn them into a natural part of the European multi-level system.⁴²

The most prominent example for the incorporation of the concept into the European political system was – as foreseen in the Maastricht Treaty – the continuing differentiation of the European multi-level system in form of the establishment of the *Committee of Regions* in 1994. In addition, the reform of European structural and regional policy during the 1990s further turned sub-state entities into both actors and objects on the European political scene. But what actually is the content of the *Europe of Regions*?

⁴¹ Despite all similarities among the Nordic countries, the individual country’s approach towards European Integration differs widely. For example in Denmark and Norway, primarily economic arguments were used in favour of EC accession but Denmark joined the EU in 1973 while Norway has stayed out until today. Moreover, the basic hindrance for Finland’s and Sweden’s EU membership before 1990 was their neutrality doctrine in foreign relations. For further information on Sweden and Finland’s neutrality policy and its revision, see Möller, Ulrika Bjereld, Ulf, 2010: *From Nordic neutrals to post-neutral Europeans: Differences in Finnish and Swedish policy transformation*, in: *Cooperation and Conflict* Vol. 45 (4), pp. 363-386.

⁴² In his contribution to a memorial publication for the Swedish political scientist Rutger Lindahl, Markus Engelbrektsson gives interesting and comprehensive overview on how a practitioner from a sub-state entity sees and localises the Europe of Regions today (Engelbrektsson, 2011: *Ursäkta, var ligger regionernes Europa? In: Alvstamm, Claes, Jännebring, Birgitta, Naurin, Daniel (ed.), 2011: 1 Europamissionens tjänst: vänbok till Rutger Lindahl, Göteborg, pp. 133-142.*

The core of the concept of the Europe of Regions is most suitably described in accordance the Swedish human geographer Richard Ek, who identifies three aspects that compose the idea of the Europe of Regions that appear in varying constellations: (1) the territorial state is out-dated, (2) regions are increasingly in competition and (3) the idea of Europe as a network. These dimensions blend with other catch words often used to argue for more regional economic and political autonomy like cross-border, learning or competing regions (Ek, 2003: 1-3).⁴³

This openness made it possible to gather many actors with potentially also diverging interests under the umbrella of the *Europe of Regions*. This counts both for regionalist movements, that successively have entered the European political scene since the 1980s as well as the European Commission that regarded the idea of a *Europe of Regions* as an appropriate measure to reduce the EU's often criticised democratic deficit by making the union more people-oriented (Ruge, 2004: 495-496).

Correspondingly, the reception of the concept was quite split, ranging from rather sceptical to cautiously optimistic evaluations (Schmitt-Egner, 2005: 25).⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the *Europe of Regions* has been implemented in many ways. For example, policy-making processes were changed in such a way that most regional entities have incorporated the EU dimension into their daily routine. Vice versa participation in the European multi-level-system has also changed the domestic arena in providing an alternative channel for the representation of interests. Moreover, the *Europe of Regions* contributed remarkably to changing the ideas behind regional policy and strengthened both the regional and the cross-border perspective in the EU's operative policies.

⁴³ Ruge also points to the flexibility as the concept's main characteristic, when tracing its origin back to conservative and anti-liberal thinking in the 1920s (Ruge, 2004: 511).

⁴⁴ According to Peter Schmitt-Egner it was Michael Keating that raised the main critique against the concept in the early 1990s, having a tendency to underestimate the persistent strong power basis and stability of the nation state. Thus, the concept has a tendency to neglect the multidimensionality of European Regionalism: the institutional and functional participation in the vertical integration process on the one hand and growing significance of horizontal, cross-border and inter-regional cooperation in Europe on the other hand (Schmitt-Egner, 2005: 28).

There have also been initiatives that tried to sharpen the EU's regional focus, for example, through the Barcelona Process or the European Commission's membership in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) (Herolf, 2010: 4).⁴⁵

The next chapter will further elaborate on the development of the multidimensional role of the EU in the Baltic Sea Region referring to (3.1.1) the EU's strategic approaches towards the region, (3.1.2) the integration of the Baltic Sea Region into its regional policy instruments and (3.1.3) give some insights on the impact of the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* for the local and the regional level.

3.1.1 EU's Strategic Approaches Towards the Baltic Sea Region

The EU's strategic approaches towards the Baltic Sea Region go back to the early 1990s, when the region was freed from the East-West divide and the debate on the political future of the region was a high-ranking political issue. In this atmosphere of change, the EU's first strategic approach towards the region, the *Baltic Sea Region Initiative* (BSRI) was formulated in 1996, followed by the *Northern Dimension Initiative* (ND) in 1998, and the *EU Strategy on the Baltic Sea Region* (EUSBSR) in 2009.

3.1.1.1 The Baltic Sea Region Initiative

Already before the Swedish and Finnish accession to the EC, both countries together with Denmark had hardly worked for a more comprehensive approach of the Commission towards the Baltic Sea Region (Knudsen, 1998: 32). Later on in 1996, the Commission finally launched the *Baltic Sea Region Initiative*.

Beforehand, in 1995, the Commission had issued a *Report on the Current State of Perspectives for Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region*, providing an overview of the state of the art of regional cooperation, including aid and collaboration activities and pointing to the formulation of a strategic paper in the near future. Already in this early

⁴⁵ The CBSS was the first international organisation concerned with neighbourhood policy that the European Commission actively participated in (Luif, 2007b: 204). However, this precedent also raised questions on the status of the European Commission's membership in the CBSS. First, there is no plausible clarification on "why the European Commission rather than the EC itself was invited, especially since the Commission itself was not an entity under international law in line with the states" (Herolf, 2010: 5). Secondly, this caused specific imbalances among the CBSS's members as the Commission was not able to "hold the rotating 12 months presidency (...and) had no mandate from the EU Council. This has been particularly significant in leading the Commission to keep clearly within its own competence in order not to arouse criticism for misusing its membership" (Herolf, 2010:9).

stage it became clear that no extra funding would be provided and that the activities under the BSRI would be based on established EU regional policy instruments like structural funds, PHARE⁴⁶ and TACIS⁴⁷ (Lannon/Van Elsuwege, 2004: 22). Jacques Santer, then president of the European Commission, finally presented the *Baltic Sea Region Initiative* (BSRI) at the Visby meeting of the CBSS in May 1996.⁴⁸

The general aim of the BSRI was to promote and support political stability and economic and regional development in the BSR by means of strengthening democracy, trade investment, economic and cross-border cooperation. It identified infrastructure, energy security and efficiency, nuclear safety, environmental protection and tourism as further important fields of activity. In addition, one of the main functions of the BSRI was to support, strengthen and sustain the role of the CBSS (Commission of the European Communities, 1996).

However, the wish of an accentuated role of the Commission in the BSR did not come true as the European Commission did not show “clear signs of strong interest in reinvigorating the Baltic Sea cooperation institutionally”, in contrast it chose to play more of an observing and monitoring role after the Visby meeting and allowed “the CBSS to play an extraordinary role” in Baltic Sea region-building (Herolf, 2010: 9). Etzold argues that this lack of activity on behalf of the Commission was a consequence of the conflictual developments in the Balkans and because “the individual preparation processes of the candidate countries for EU membership seemed more important at that time” (Etzold, 2010: 251).

With regard to the implementation of the BSRI, the text repeatedly refers to the specific regional policy programmes such as INTERREG, PHARE and TACIS. These programmes

⁴⁶ PHARE stands for *Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies*. It was one of the EU's instruments that were to support the pre-accession process of the Central and Eastern European Countries. (http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/enlargement/2004_and_2007_enlargement/e50004_en.htm; 4.November 2013, 13:29).

⁴⁷ TACIS stands for *Technical Aid to the Commonwealth of Independent States*. The EU Commissions' programme ran from 2000-2006 and was aimed at the EU's partner states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. TACIS was to support their transition to market economy, to reinforce democracy and the rule of law. (http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/external_relations/relations_with_third_countries/eastern_europe_and_central_asia/r17003_en.htm; 4. November 2013, 13:34).

⁴⁸ During the same meeting, the Swedish CBSS presidency under Göran Persson launched the so-called *Visby-Charter*, indicating the main fields for regional cooperation around the Baltic Rim and within the CBSS. Both documents show remarkable cross-references and linkages. Both for example, were in favour of the establishment of a permanent secretariat and argued for the complementarities of the work of the European Union and the CBSS (Herolf, 2010: 8).

are/ were to be used in order to enhance state-to-state, region-to-region as well as people-to-people contacts across borders. Moreover, the BSRI points to many relevant issue areas that have a distinct cross-border dimension e.g. environment, nuclear safety or infrastructure (Commission of the European Communities, 1996).

Evaluating the effects of the BSRI is no simple matter, however, the most visible output probably was the establishment of a permanent secretariat for the CBSS. That way the CBSS gained an institutional standing and enhanced its visibility (Christiansen/Petito/Tonra, 2000: 400). Catellani regards the BSRI as “an important step forward in the process of further involvement of the EU in the area since it contained a comprehensive approach to the area and identified the priorities of the EU in the region” (Catellani, 2001: 11). Moreover, it points to very important aspects for further regional cooperation: “the importance of the regional institutional structure based on a regional and a subregional level” and the general need for a better regional networking and coordination of the single regional initiatives and the inclusion of non-governmental organisations within the framework of the CBSS (Catellani, 2001: 11/ Commission of the European Communities, 1996).

That way the BSRI reflected the main characteristic of Baltic Sea cooperation, being a multi-level approach, including state and non-state actors from different levels and backgrounds and covering a wide range of political issues.

3.1.1.2 The Northern Dimension⁴⁹

One year after the presentation of the BSRI, in 1997, the Finnish Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen suggested to the President of the European Commission, Jacques Santer, that the EU should develop a strategy for the North by formulating the long-term economic, political and social interests of the EU in this specific area (Haukkala, 2004: 100/Luif, 2007: 205).⁵⁰ The aim was to raise more attention to North-Eastern Europe and the specific challenges of these regions, “like the harsh climate, the long distances and the

⁴⁹ Within scientific literature, the difference between the terms Northern Dimension and Northern Dimension Initiative often appear unclear. Here the Northern Dimension Initiative refers to the Finnish impulses given to the EU’s policy towards the North while the Northern Dimension is exclusively used for the concrete policies formulated under the label of the Northern Dimension on the EU level.

⁵⁰ Gebhard provides more detailed information about the prehistory of the Northern Dimension, (ND) pointing to the dynamics between the BSRI as a Swedish and the ND as a Finnish approach towards the region.

extreme disparities in living standard and welfare as well as the ecological sensitivity of the Baltic and the Arctic Sea regions” (Gebhard, 2009: 105). This all happened against the background that the overall situation of the Baltic Sea region had once again changed remarkably as the Baltic States and Poland had handed in their applications for EU membership while the relations towards Russia still were more of classical inter-governmental character. However, the EU had started to support cooperation with Russia’s North (Heininen, 2001: 30).

In that context, a re-orientation process within Finnish Foreign Policy was initiated. It was strongly connected to a research plan on *Alternatives on Finland’s Northern Policy 1996-1999* that posed the question ‘to what extent should Finland engage in European decision-making?’ Generally, the Northern Dimension Initiative (ND) approach expressed the Finnish focus on North-western Russia and has to be seen both in context and contrast with Sweden’s and Denmark’s focus on the whole Baltic Sea region (Novack, 2001: 89) as well as Norway’s focus on the Arctic waters (Arter, 2000: 681).⁵¹

This strategy was presented in December 1999 (Heininen, 2001: 26-33).⁵² On this occasion, the Commission also was asked to formulate a first action plan (2001-2003) in order to implement the strategy (Herolf, 2010: 10). As regards content, topics like the promotion of “economic development, stability and security in the region [...] cross-border issues [...] narrowing disparities of living standards [and the reduction of (M.S.)] environmental and nuclear threats” were in focus (Commission of the European Communities, 1998: 4-5).

Among the Baltic Sea states, the Finnish initiative was not uncontroversial for two reasons. First, it appeared as a unilateral initiative by Finland and secondly, it also appeared mainly to serve the Finnish interests (Williams, 2001: 20). Once the

⁵¹ For more details on the Finnish interests cf. Lassi Heininen, 2001: *Ideas and Outcomes: Finding a Concrete Form for the Northern Dimension Initiative*, in: Ojanen, Hanna (ed.): *The Northern Dimension: Fuel for the EU?*, Helsinki/Berlin 2001, pp.20-53 and David Arter: *Small State Influence Within the EU: The Case of Finland’s ‘Northern Dimension Initiative’*, JCMS, 2000(no 5), pp. 677-697.

⁵² The Northern Dimension has often been criticised for being too fuzzy and too vague, Ojanen gives, in her article *The EU and Its ‘Northern Dimension’: An actor in Search of a Policy or a Policy in Search of an Actor?* (*European Foreign Affairs Review*, 5(3), 359-376 (2000), an interesting overview of the strategic background of this Finnish initiative and the specific circumstances within the EU which made an open concept an important precondition to achieving acceptance among the member states.

geographical scope of the ND had been extended towards the south, the initiative was more wholeheartedly endorsed in the region.

The ND pointed to the importance of the existing structures and contacts, to be used for further development. In that context it also assigned more weight to “cross-border institution building, along the lines of the EUREGIOs, which are already widely established in central Europe” (Council of the European Union, 2000: 34).

In view of the imminent EU enlargement, a second Northern Dimension Action Plan was formulated for the period 2004-2006. Largely covering the same issue areas “but in a more structured and strategic project-oriented way [(...) it (M.S.)] also introduced two cross-cutting themes, the Arctic region and the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Federation as regions with specific development needs in most issue areas” (Etzold, 2010: 252).

Conceptually, the focus of the ND was on EU external and cross-border policies in the Baltic Sea and the Arctic Sea Region including Iceland and Norway and North West Russia. As the ND shared many similarities with the BSRI, it was regarded as a competitor to it in the beginning. But in face of the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty, it was “different in embracing all the activities of the EU in the region, thus stretching across all the pillars” of European Cooperation and especially the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Herolf, 2010: 21).

All in all, the ND is less a coherent strategy but an umbrella over the EU’s rather fragmented policy towards the North; it is often criticised for being too fuzzy and too vague as well as for its weak institutionalisation. Especially its financial dependence on existing programmes like PHARE, TACIS and INTERREG repeatedly raised criticism (Gebhard, 2009: 110). Moreover, it concentrated “its assistance only to already functioning networks”, thus, its scope for action remained rather limited (Williams, 2001: 20). In contrast Haukkala also sees the ND’s focus on existing structures positive as “the proliferation of regional cooperation schemes in Northern Europe had reached such a level that organisations were stepping on each other’s toes” (Haukkala, 2004: 102). However, the lacking own budget line has obviously been the price the Northern EU member states had to pay in order to gain support from the southern members (Moroff, 2002: 159; Haukkala, 2004: 101; Gebhard, 2009: 111).

Later on also its EU internal standing

“has been considerably challenged by the emergence of other EU policies with geopolitical or regional implications, e.g. bilateral agreements and partnerships the Union upholds with some of the regional actors” (Gebhard, 2009: 112).

On the other hand the ND opened the regional process both towards the candidate countries and Russia. Technically this meant the improvement of the coordination between the separate EU instruments: This counts first and foremost for the coordination between the INTERREG III initiative and the TACIS programme, primarily making them compatible for funding across nation-state borders (Catellani, 2001: 59-64).⁵³ Especially for the Russian part “this meant access to the assistance programme TACIS, the Partnership and cooperation Agreement (PCA) and the EU’s Common Strategy on Russia (CSR)” (Herolf, 2010: 21).

Finally, in 2007, the character of the ND changed entirely through a restructuring process initiated by Russia. Since then it can no longer be regarded as an EU external policy but instead as cooperation forum where the EU and Russia, Iceland and Norway meet on equal grounds (Etzold, 2010: 253). That way the EU missed control of the ND, this was obviously the political price it had to pay for both the continuance of Russian participation and the Northern Dimension as such (Herolf, 2010: 21).⁵⁴

Despite all legitimate criticism on its impact and effectiveness, the Northern Dimension can still be considered as one of the most important outcomes of EU enlargement in 1995 and as a proof of the fact that Finland’s and Sweden’s EU membership has indeed affected how the Union interprets and approaches its relations to the North and with Russia.

⁵³ Moroff speaks of three major obstacles for the programmes’ interoperability: (1) TACIS and PHARE relied on separate national funds, (2) differing processing periods due to different administrative handling and (3) varying programme periods (Moroff, 2002: 168).

⁵⁴ Herolf, furthermore, regards it as impossible to see the wider treaty basis as giving better possibilities for cooperation. In spite of the EU’s good intentions the heterogeneity of the region (especially concerning Russia), as well as that of the EU itself, weakened the basis for an effective multilateralism (Herolf 2010: 21). For more on the Northern Dimension see the H. Ojanen (2001), *The Northern Dimension: New Fuel for the EU?*, Programme on the Northern Dimension of the CFSP, Vol. 12, Helsinki; H. Moroff (2002), *The EU’s Northern Soft Security Policy: emergence and effectiveness*, in Moroff H. (ed.), *European Soft Security Policies: the Northern Dimension*, Helsinki; N. Catellani (2003) *The EU’s Northern Dimension, testing a new approach to neighbourhood relations?* Stockholm.

3.1.1.3 The EU Strategy on the Baltic Sea Region

With European enlargement in 2004, the main objectives of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, namely to safeguard economic and democratic transition in the former Eastern part of the Baltic Sea Region, were largely fulfilled. However, in face of “growing dissatisfaction over the stagnating cooperation in the region” the so-called *Baltic Intergroup* in the European Parliament took a new initiative for a European policy towards the Baltic Sea Region. This group consisted of seven members of the European Parliament from the Baltic Sea littoral states and the British chairman Christopher Beazley (Schymik, 2011a: 11). One of the topics debated among the members was how to change economic dislocation in the area. On behalf of the group, a strategy on that topic was formulated, “presented to President Barroso in November 2005 and followed up in 2006 with a report authored by then Finnish MEP Alexander Stubb” (Herolf, 2010: 16).

Given a general lack of results of the overall regional cooperation across the Baltic Sea, the European Parliament then agreed on a resolution for a *Baltic Sea Strategy for the Northern Dimension* and asked the European Commission to formulate a proposal for a Baltic Sea Region strategy, which was supposed “to take a comprehensive approach to the area as one singular entity, rather than merely viewing it as an administrative area for various cooperation schemes pertaining to parts of the area” (Bengtsson, 2009: 2). The basic idea was to conceptualise the strategy as an EU internal strategy, while the external dimension primarily given by the common border with Russia was continuously to be handled through the ND. The Parliament defined some key points, according to which the new EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region was to “reinforce the internal pillar of the Northern Dimension, cover horizontally different aspects of regional cooperation, promote synergies and avoid overlapping between different regional bodies and organisations” (European Parliament, 2006).

Finally, in June 2009 the Commission handed over its communication and the European Council adopted it in October of the same year. The primary objects of that strategy are to improve the environmental state of the Baltic Sea Region and the Baltic Sea, to support economic development removing trade barriers and fostering innovation, improve both traffic and energy infrastructure, as well as to fight cross-border crime (Etzold, 2010: 255).

Together with the action plan formulated in 2010, it has become clear, that the Baltic

Sea Strategy primarily is conceptualised in order to better coordinate the different existing policy instruments in coherence with the formulated super-ordinated priorities. This means that no extra funding is provided from the European level, much more the allocation criteria in the specific programmes are to be reviewed according to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy and the action plan. This background also explains its primary EU internal orientation though being aware of the necessity to include other neighbouring countries, too (Commission of the European Communities, 2009).⁵⁵

However, in practice the EUBSRS's domestic character most probably will not prove to be realistic in practice since especially its key issues, environmental and maritime issues, affect Russia as a littoral state of the Baltic Sea, which turns cooperation with Russia into a precondition for success (Bengtsson, 2009: 8; Herolf, 2010: 21).

3.1.1.4 The EU's Strategic Approaches Compared

In conclusion, we can say that the Baltic Sea Region has been on the European agenda since the 1990s and that the EU has launched three strategic approaches all in all that cover – with certain variation – the geographical area of the Baltic Sea; interestingly, all three approaches originate in initiatives launched by players from the Baltic Sea states and they all tried to raise “the awareness of the EU for the region and for the needs of the northern states” (Williams, 2001: 18).

The often-criticised lack of results in Baltic Sea cooperation points to the gap between expectations and outcome, and is also reflected in the repeated claim for better coordination between the existing policy tools. Another main challenge for the EU's Baltic Sea Region strategy is the fact that historically, the separation between EU

⁵⁵ Today the Baltic Sea Strategy from 2009 together with the Danube strategy (2011) of the European Union are regarded as model cases for a new political concept of the EU, the so-called macro-regional strategy. This macro-regional strategy is clearly oriented towards the EU internal macro-regions and aims at the transnational level, “a level which is located between the nation state and the supra-national community, and therefore further differentiates the multi-level EU system” (Schymik, 2011a: 5). For further insights about the formulation, the content as well as the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the concept of the macro-regional strategy please refer to Carsten Schymik's article *Blueprint for a Macro-Region: EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea and Danube Regions*. He gives a comparative study on the two existing macro-regional strategies and also refers to the consequences of the three No's, which means that in the context of the implementation of the strategy there will be NO additional funding, NO new European legislation and NO new form of institutionalisation (Schymik, 2011a: 15-22). In addition to that, Lidia Puka gives - in her short article *Review of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: Key Challenges* - a critical overview of Baltic Sea cooperation in general and the deficits of the Baltic Sea Strategy in particular (Puka, 2011).

internal and external affairs has shown to be rather impracticable over the course of time. The top issues around the Baltic Sea, ranging from environmental protection to organised crime and infrastructure, are marked by a high degree of interdependence and often have to be tackled together, including non-EU member states.

As regards content, all three strategic approaches share a great overlap, topics like environmental protection, economic prosperity, energy, infrastructure or the fight against organised crime have been on the agenda ever since.⁵⁶

Interestingly, all three strategic frameworks were to be financed through the established instruments of EU regional policy. While this is often being criticised for weakening their power basis, the result of the last years has been an increased compatibility of the EU's regional policy instruments; in particular the harmonisation of the INTERREG, PHARE and TACIS programmes during the last decades were an important milestone in supporting cross-border cooperation and regional interaction across the Baltic Sea.

While not specifically pointing to the significance of urban areas, the degree to which the single approaches themselves refer to cross-border cooperation as an important aspect of regional cooperation differs significantly. While this aspect is very strong in the BSRI, it appears less important in the ND and can hardly even be found within the EUBSRS. While some might argue that this could be an indicator for the declining importance of cross-border cooperation, a different interpretation seems plausible when including the respective action plans formulated. Here, the cross-border dimension is nearly omnipresent when it comes to the implementation of both the ND and the EUBSRS, that way the lack within the strategic documents obviously expresses that cross-border cooperation has turned from being a desirable aim into a self-evident tool of the every day practice of implementing the EU's regional policy.

⁵⁶ Some topics, like human rights that were quite in focus in the early years, have taken a back seat during the last years. This mainly materialised in 2003, when the office of the CBSS Commissioner on Democratic Institutions and Human Rights was closed (<http://www.cbss.org/Civil-Security-and-the-Human-Dimension/civil-security-and-the-human-dimension>; 27 February 2013). The idea was also to include the more peripheral areas in the arctic North and Russia. The main contrast between the BSRI and the ND is their geographical frame of reference, which is wider in the Northern Dimension, but in the official objectives and policy issues were very similar (Gebhard, 2010: 139).

3.1.2 European Regional Policy

European regional policy is an important medium for the translation of both the EU's strategic approaches and the idea of a Europe of Regions in operative policies. That way, regional policy has turned into an important tool to disperse the EU's aims and values both in domestic and cross-border or transnational contexts (Stöber, 2004: 42).

Juridically, European regional policy has its background in the Treaty of Rome (1957), which defines the equalisation of disparities as one of the main goals of European Policy (Article 158 TEC). Although it was not until the establishment of the *European Fund for Regional Development* (ERDF) in 1975, that an active regional policy of the European level started. Hitherto existing regional policy had been in accordance with national regional policy and had shown heavy deficiencies. These deficits were not overcome until the reform of European Structural Policy in the 1980s.⁵⁷

With the approval of the *Single European Act* (SEA) in 1986, regional policy became approved as a deep-seated EU joint task (Urbanowicz, 2005: 89) for the first time. Simultaneously, a re-organisation of structural and regional policy began. In this context, the European Fund for Regional Development was formally included into the EEC treaty. In addition to that, it was commissioned under the common cohesion policy together with the two remaining structural funds, the *European Social Fund* and the *European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund* (Article 130a TEC).

In 1988, a reform of the structural funds with regard to finance and content was passed. The outcome was that the budget was doubled and new basic principles for structural policy were formulated. These include a (1) *concentration* of the funds on priority, regional- and targeted funding objectives, (2) the transition from single project funding to an integrated perennial programme funding (*programming*), (3) the principle of *additionality*, which means that European funding is an add on and not a compensation for lacking national funding. (4) Finally, the principle of *partnership*, according to which regions participate on equal grounds in programming and implementing regional policy (Urbanowicz, 2005: 90). These reforms assigned municipalities and regions a more important and active role in the European architecture and moreover, they

⁵⁷ For details on the original organisation of EU structural policy and the reform negotiations see Urbanowicz, Magdalena, 2005: *Europa der Regionen: Die Regionen und die europäische Regionalpolitik in der EU-25 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Polens*, Berlin, pp. 83-93.

“enhanced the autonomy of the Commission on the policy process of the regional policy. (... [M])any authors praised the 1988 reforms as path breaking because of the upgrading of the role of municipalities and regions in the European Union” (Kettunen/Kungla, 2005: 355-356).

Particularly the introduction of EU community initiative that the European Commission decided upon by itself turned into an important instrument of European Regional Policy. In contrast to the nationally defined development areas, these have a clear European dimension as funds can also be used in a cross-border context (Eckstein, 2001: 156). The community initiatives included the programmes URBAN/URBAN II⁵⁸, LEADER/LEADER+⁵⁹, EQUAL⁶⁰ and INTERREG.

The Maastricht Treaty further strengthened the regional dimension through the inclusion of the principle of subsidiarity and the establishment of the *Committee of Regions*. During the European Council in Edinburgh in 1992, a sharp increase of the budget of the structural fund was approved. Moreover, the development of border regions was assigned to be of specific interest for the EU “eftersom dessa representerar både ett potentiellt hinder och en potentiell modell för den integrerade utvecklingen” (Wieslander, 1997: 99).⁶¹

In the subsequent decades, European regional policy became an important catalyst, transmitting the EU’s priorities to the operative level, particularly in the process of widening and deepening cooperation all over Europe and in the Baltic Sea Region. On the one hand the new member states received access to internal programmes and on the other hand new instruments to further regional and cross-border cooperation along the EU external border were created.

⁵⁸ The community initiative URBAN aims at cities with either high unemployment, high crime rate or severe environmental pollution. The aim is to support mutual learning, education and qualification, e.g. through an effective neighbourhood management, in order to revive the city. The initiative was obviously not continued after the end of the second programming period in 2006 (http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/social_inclusion_fight_against_poverty/g24209_de.htm; 12.12.2012, 9:37).

⁵⁹ LEADER and LEADER+ were initiatives that aimed at the development of sustainable and comprehensive strategies for rural areas and a better linking up of these areas (http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/publi/fact/leader/2006_de.pdf 12.12.2012, 9:45). In 2006 LEADER was integrated as a specific focus in the newly-established *European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development* http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/agriculture/general_framework/l60032_de.htm; 12.12.2012, 9:57).

⁶⁰ EQUAL is an initiative that furthers action against all kinds of discrimination and inequalities with regard to the labour market (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal/index_de.cfm?noredirect; 12.12.2012, 9:48).

⁶¹ “as these represented both a potential hindrance and a potential model for an integrated development.”

In 2007, PHARE and other accession instruments⁶² were joined under the umbrella of the *Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA)*. With the programme period 2007-2013, the status of the INTERREG initiative was upgraded to an independent goal of European structural policy. Structurally, it retained the main defining criteria, like the division of the programme into cross-border (A), transnational (B) and interregional (C) forms of cooperation.

However, all political programmes define a space for interaction, they draw specific lines be it administratively, as regards content and/or materially. Therefore regional policy instruments should be analysed both with regard to their enabling but also with regard to their restricting character.

Having this in mind, we can conclude that EU Regional Policy today is a comprehensive framework for cooperation, defining priorities and goals and providing financial incentives, which make it attractive to collaborate. All relevant countries of this study participate in EU Regional policy – even Norway.⁶³ That way all relevant authorities are affected by all kinds of decisions taken in Brussels and especially with regard to the cross-border and transnational context of European regional policy.

In case of cross-border cooperation of urban areas, it is primarily the INTERREG programme that provides funding for cross-border projects. Even if the specific cases may profit from other financial sources of the EU's regional policy – these do not have an explicit cross-border dimension. Against this background, this study on cross-border cooperation of urban areas concentrates on the INTERREG programme and its impact on cross-border cooperation.

⁶² There were two other instruments to further preparation for EU accession of the central and Eastern European Countries: the *Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development* (SAPARD) and the *Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession* (ISPA).

⁶³ Norway participates in the INTERREG programme at the invitation of Finland and Sweden. That means that all Baltic Sea States except for Russia participate in one of the main instruments within European Regional Policy for cross-border cooperation. Russia participates in cross-border cooperation through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) that has replaced the TACIS programme from 2007 onwards (http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/funding_en.htm; 27.2.2013) That way EU regional policy has become both a means to spread and implement the EU's values and priorities within the union and to its near abroad.

3.1.3 Europeanisation of the Sub-state Level

While the Baltic Sea Region Initiative, the Northern Dimension and the EU strategy share remarkable overlaps, as regards content, for the Baltic Sea Region, they historically stand for specific stages of the process of Europeanisation in the Baltic Sea Area. The Baltic Sea Initiative stands in close context with the Northern enlargement of the European Union in 1995 and the early region-building process in the Baltic Sea Region in the 1990s, while in that context the ND primarily aimed at widening the EU's perspective on the North. In contrast, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region stands in the context of the 'Big Bang' enlargement in 2004 and is supposed to take more an EU internal perspective on the region. Due to these different perspectives, both the EUSBSR and the ND will keep existing alongside each other in contrast to the BSRI which was more or less replaced by other regional approaches.

Europeanisation in the BSR, in form of the implementation of rules, directives and strategies, has had an impact on the political systems and processes on the national, regional and local level. Together with the respective action plans, these are translated into concrete policies and establish a framework for interaction and cooperation. That way they do not only implement single aims and goals, but also unfold their specific impact on the practices, self-understanding and structures on the different political levels.

In 2004, Dosenrode described three dimensions of how European Integration unfolds its influence on the regional level: (1) passive, (2) mental, and (3) active Europeanisation.

(1) *Passive* Europeanisation "is characterised by the regions acting upon EU legislation which they have not been involved in laying down and which has been transferred into national law" (Dosenrode, 2004a: 3). One example of *passive* Europeanisation of the regional level that was very controversial both in the Nordic countries and Estonia, is the implementation of the EU standards for territorial classification, the so-called *Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques* (NUTS), which are the basis for the allocation of the EU's regional funds.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ The NUTS classification applies three levels that do not necessarily correspond to the given local and regional structures within a specific country. The NUTS 1 level applies for areas of three to seven million inhabitants, the NUTS 2 level for 800,000 to three million inhabitants and the NUTS 3 level, from 150,000 to 800,000 inhabitants. While this classification seems

(2) *Mental* Europeanisation stands for the “growing awareness of the surrounding environment, a process of learning” that increasingly brings the European dimension into everyday work of the sub-state or regional entity (Dosenrode, 2004a: 3). The degree of *mental* Europeanisation is hard to measure in figures as it primarily directs attention to the degree to which the European level is incorporated into administration’s every day work. It tries to find out how far the EU has become a cross-cutting element in public administration be it on the national, regional or local level.

(3) *Active* Europeanisation is based on mental Europeanisation, it is the “goal-oriented, conscious and voluntary participation of the regions in activities in which one or more of the co-actors are, directly or indirectly, of another nationality than the regions in question” (Dosenrode, 2004a: 3). That way *active* Europeanisation tries to figure out to what degree the regional or sub-state level makes use of the European level as an alternative channel in order to safeguard their interests, to “secure resources to the region, and [...] to diminish an asymmetric relationship to the central government” (Dosenrode, 2004a: 3).

Still, the extent to which a state is influenced by or is able to influence EU regulations depends on its degree of political integration. Different stages in the accession process or individual bilateral arrangements stand for different degrees of openness towards the demands of the European level.

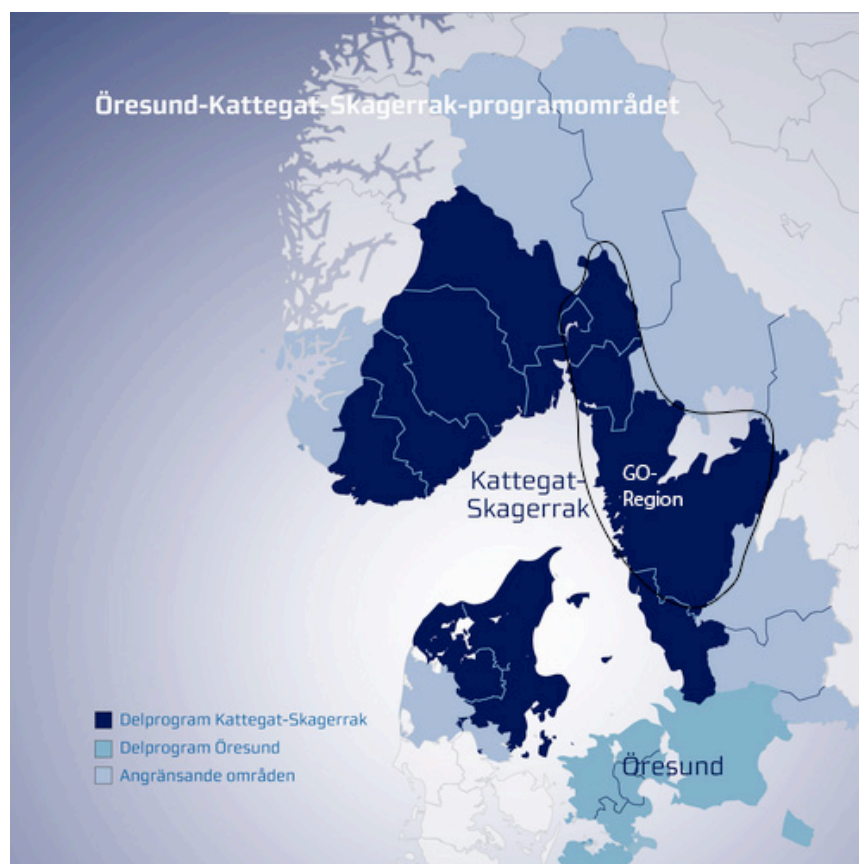
For example, Norway is primarily linked to the EU via the EEA agreement and has relatively limited formal ties towards the European Union apart from the rather wide field of cooperation. However, there is evidence that all three dimensions of Europeanisation are relevant in Norway and the Norwegian regions, too. Particularly in areas where Norway participates on equal grounds but also in other areas, spill-over effects may cause a certain degree of adaptation or even open new scope for action.

rather applicable in a large and densely populated country like Germany, the sparsely populated Nordic States or Estonia had problems fitting this division (Kettunen/Kungla, 2005: 361; Bergmann-Winberg, 2000: 166). Providing the basis for the allocation of the EU’s regional funds, the definition of the borders of the NUTS levels may have far-reaching consequences on the funding provided by the EU, especially on a local level. “Additional variability arises for smaller regional aggregates - so-called NUTS 3 regions - which are nested in a NUTS 2 mother region. Whereas some relatively rich NUTS 3 regions may receive EU funds because their NUTS 2 mother region qualifies, other relatively poor NUTS 3 regions may not receive EU funds because their NUTS 2 mother region does not qualify” (Becker/Egger/Ehrlich/Fenge, 2008: 1). That way the borders drawn to reduce regional disparities may also have the opposite impact and produce disparities.

A very specific degree of openness and readiness towards the regulations of the European Union counts for candidate countries. While in the beginning, EU-Estonian relations concentrated on the promotion of stable institutions, once the accession negotiations started, the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* was in focus. In that process, the European Commission exerts influence on the candidate countries in many ways:

“more or less directly through PHARE-sponsored regional programmes, through day-to-day interactions between candidates’ representatives and Commission officials and through the delegations in the candidate countries” (Kettunen/Kungla 2005: 361).

In the aftermaths of accession, relations to the EU once again change remarkably as the new member states from then on participate on equal footing like the other member states. In practice, it may be hard to separate the different dimensions of Europeanisation, as it is primarily a comprehensive process characterised by interdependencies and cross-references.

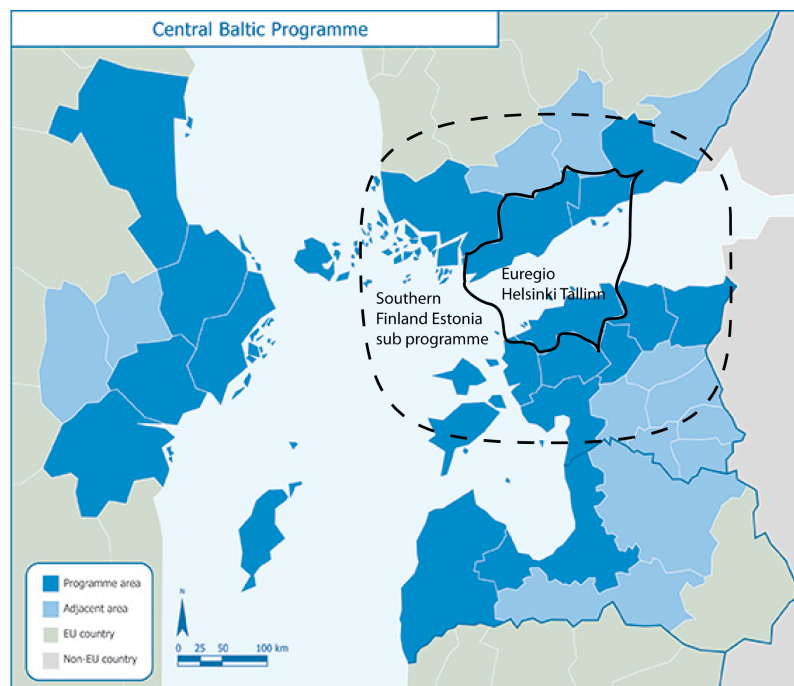


(Source: <http://www.interreg-oks.eu/se/Menu/Om+programmet/Programomr%C3%A5de>; 2.October 2013, 9:59; adaptation M.S.)

Figure 1: Programme Area of INTERREG IV A Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak

So far, chapter (3.1) on the EU and the Baltic Sea Region gave an overview of both the evolution and impact of the multidimensional role of the EU within the Baltic Sea Region. In a cross border context, it is primarily regional policy in form of the INTERREG programme that provides appropriate means to implement EU policies on a local cross-border level. The layout of its specific programme areas, together with its financial strength may both further and hinder cooperation across borders. Therefore, the subsequent maps give an overview of the single case study's coverage through the EU's INTERREG programme.

Figure 1 displays the geographical area covered by the *INTERREG IV A Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak*. While the Oresund region has its own sub-programme, the GO-Region is part of the Kattegat Skagerrak sub-programme. The conflation of these two former independent programmes under one umbrella makes it possible to apply for funding for projects that go across the two sub-programmes. The first project that crossed these sub-programme boundaries was the COINCO north project that mainly focused on the improvement of transport infrastructure between Oslo and Copenhagen.



(<http://www.centralbaltic.eu/programme>; 2.October 2013: 10:01; adaptation M.S.)

Figure 2: Programme Area of INTERREG IV A Central Baltic

Figure 2 shows the layout of the Central Baltic INTERREG IV A Programme 2007-2013. Cooperation between Southern Finland and Estonia is covered by one sub-programme. Moreover, it displays the area covered by the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn in order to show that Finnish-Estonian covers a wider area and that the Euregio is one form of cooperation amongst many.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that the programme geography is a matter of negotiation. Until 2007, Øresund and Kattegat-Skagerrak were separated programmes with no options for funding across programme borders. Lacking compatibility of programme structures is a recurring issue named by regional actor, for the time being particularly in the south western Baltic Sea Region.⁶⁵

3.2 The Nordic Perspective on Baltic Sea Region-building

While the Nordic countries attentively observed European cooperation from the beginning, the approaches of the individual Nordic country to European integration varied strongly and became only gradually formalised through association agreements and in some cases EU membership. Much more, the Nordic countries concentrated on cooperation in the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers until the early 1990s.

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM)⁶⁶, founded in 1972, is the intergovernmental complementary to the Nordic Council (1952)⁶⁷ – a forum for interparliamentary cooperation. Taken together, they stand for the institutionalised form of Nordic

⁶⁵ The former independent INTERREG programme areas Fehmarnbeltregion and Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N. work for a common new Danish-German INTERREG A programme for the upcoming funding period 2014-2020 (http://www.fehmarnbeltregion.net/de/interreg_5a/; 2.October 2013, 10:05).

⁶⁶ The Nordic Council of Ministers was founded in 1971 in order to achieve better coordination between the single national governments and the Nordic Council (Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999: 5). Similar to the European Council, the NCM meets in different formations of the respective departments, according to the topics handled. Apart from regular meetings between of the Nordic prime ministers, Nordic cooperation is coordinated through the Council of Nordic cooperation ministers. Consensus decisions taken in the NCM are of binding character to the member states.

⁶⁷ The Nordic Council's members are elected by the national parliaments in the five member states according to the political parties' representation. The main characteristic of cooperation in the Nordic Council is that it cannot take formal binding decisions, rather it speaks in the form of recommendations that are to be implemented on the national level and on a voluntary basis. However, the inclusive negotiation process and comprehensive work in the committees are supposed to guarantee a certain degree of compulsion on the informal level (Hansen, 1994: 207; Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999b: 9).

cooperation. Nordic cooperation in general covers the Scandinavian states Sweden, Norway and Denmark, Finland and Iceland, as well as the autonomous areas of Greenland and Åland.

Nordic cooperation has had a changeful history, including several failed attempts to establish a more supranational form of cooperation.⁶⁸ Thus, it has remained intergovernmental in its character until today. While achievements in Nordic cooperation initially often went further than within the EC⁶⁹, the political changes in the early 1990s and the integration of Sweden and Denmark into the EU has had the consequence that Nordic cooperation has taken a back seat.

Still, Nordic cooperation is an important aspect of Baltic Sea cooperation – not least as the NCM has launched programmes and initiatives to enhance cooperation in the Baltic Sea Area. Schymik even states that the Nordic countries had major influence on Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: “Der Ostseeraum hat sich nach nordischem Vorbild entwickelt und kann in diesem Sinne als nordische Einflussosphäre bezeichnet werden” (Schymik, 2011b: 65). Against this background, the subsequent chapters explore (1) the Nordic path of cooperation, (2) Nordic Policy towards the Baltic Sea Region, (3) and Nordic regional policy.

3.2.1 The Nordic Path of Cooperation

Apart from the European context, cooperation in the respective case studies is – though to a varying extent – included in Nordic cooperation and its specific ideas. The origins of Nordic cooperation go back to the 19th century. After a period of closer cooperation during the First World War, diverging trade relations had the consequence that foreign policy became less important within Nordic cooperation. Similar social developments in the North during the 1930s had stronger cooperation in domestic affairs such as public administration, interest organisation or cultural elites as a consequence, and

⁶⁸ Failed examples for Nordic cooperation are: the Nordic Defense Union, a customs union and a stronger economic cooperation in Nordek. Interestingly, the failure to establish more cooperation in these policy fields was accompanied by intensified cooperation in fields of domestic policy such as postal system, media and transport, social security, labour market, science, research and culture (Stråth, 1994: 204-205; Guðmundsson, 1997: 282).

⁶⁹ In many respects such as the harmonisation of social conditions, cultural exchange, the formulation of action plans and various concrete projects, the Nordic countries had achieved a higher level of integration based on a sound balance between cooperation and voluntariness (Hansen, 1994: 207, Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999b: 7).

strengthened relations between the Nordic countries. Later on, experiences shared during the Second World War had a stronger solidarity between the Nordic countries as a consequence; not least Nordic Cooperation was reckoned to be “a defensive response to great power rivalries that may threaten the individual integrity of the Nordic countries” (Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999: 8).

The driving force between integration in the post war era was primarily the idea of a Nordic identity that legitimised closer cooperation among the Nordic countries and that could be traced far back in history. Bo Stråth comprises the essence of Nordic cooperation, which both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers stand for, as pragmatic, informal, regular, inclusive and in harmony with strong national identities (1994: 208).⁷⁰ Despite having a strong bottom up legitimacy, Nordic cooperation primarily retained its intergovernmental character (Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999b: 9).

A central characteristic of Nordic Cooperation was that too little cooperation created a demand for more Nordic cooperation. However, comprehensive Nordic cooperation projects were often problematic as at least one of the national political elites came to the opinion that cooperation went too far. This balance between cooperation and voluntarism in the Nordic Council was of particular significance as Nordic Cooperation was seen as a cooperation “som inte gick för långt, men som heller inte upplevdes som betydelselöst eller bara rituellt/retoriskt” (Stråth, 1994: 201).⁷¹ On the basis of voluntary cooperation that relied on a harmonisation of social conditions, cultural exchange, the elaboration of action plans and varying concrete projects, the Nordic countries had reached a higher level of integration by the mid 1980s than the EC countries (Hansen, 1994: 207; Baldersheim/Ståhlberg, 1999b: 7).

Most interestingly, Schymik concludes that cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region in general and within the CBSS in particular take up these characteristics that derive from the Nordic way of cooperation and derives six basic elements: 1) cooperation on the basis of inter-state norms, 2) low degree of formalisation and pragmatic orientation, 3)

⁷⁰ That way, Nordic cooperation, based on strong national identities, was able to provide a kind of shelter against the uncertainties caused by European integration. This was only possible as the idea of Norden was vague enough and had a positive connotation. When Nordic plans became concrete and comprehensive like in the plans for a Nordic economic cooperation (Nordek) the idea lost its integrating power (Stråth, 1994: 208).

⁷¹ “that did not go too far and that was neither perceived as insignificant or purely ritualistic/rhetorical.”

focus on people-to-people and cultural contacts, 4) emphasis on sub-state and civil society cooperation, 5) emphasis on 'Nordic' topics, such as welfare state, environmental protection, or gender equality, 6) exclusion of hard security issues (Schymik, 2011b: 79-81). The next section gives an overview of how the leaking out of Nordic norms on Baltic Sea cooperation has taken place.

3.2.2 Nordic Policy Towards the Baltic Sea Area

The spread of this Nordic way of cooperation around the Baltic Rim has been accompanied by the so-called *närområdspolitik*, literally, while not very sophisticatedly translated as 'near area policy'.⁷² This rather active policy of the Nordic states to their neighbouring countries was launched in the early 1990s. Together with the formulation of strategic action plans, the opening of the Nordic Council's information offices in the three Baltic Capitals was one of the core elements of the Nordic approach to its near surroundings. That way, it became the first international organisation with a representation in the re-emerging Baltic States (Ojanen, 2004: 6).

Originally, the main goals of the *närområdspolitik* were to support the Baltic States in their strive for independence and the transformation process, to improve the living conditions, to improve mobility between the Nordic countries and the near abroad, and to support the Baltic States in their accession process to the EU and NATO. The *närområdspolitik* also had internal effects as it brought new dynamic to the Nordic cooperation that had achieved everything that was possible in the 1950s and 1960s, even the compatibility with the EC at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s (Ojanen, 2004: 7).

This policy was primarily implemented through three activities: (1) the above mentioned information offices, (2) scholarships and mobility programmes and (3) promotion of topic based projects. The Nordic countries invested a lot of financial resources in the implementation of this *närområdspolitik*.

⁷² Carsten Schymik points to the difficulties of translating the term 'närområdspolitik' to German. The same counts for the translation to English. In accordance with his argumentation I decided to use the Swedish term *närområdspolitik* in order to mark the qualitative difference of this early post Cold War period until the term 'neighbourhood policy' was introduced in the Nordic Arena (Schymik, 2011b: 72). In the context of the Baltic States' accession to the EU in 2004, this new term 'neighbourhood policy' stands for a geographical and to some extent also content-related re-orientation of Nordic 'near abroad policy'.

In the early 1990s, cooperation between the Baltics and the Nordic countries “had the character of being [a] support and aid function” (NCM, 2004: 1). Later on relations were gradually transferred on a more equal basis, which the NB8⁷³, an informal forum where Nordic and Baltic countries meet on equal grounds founded in 2000, primarily stands for.⁷⁴ NB8 cooperation primarily takes place in form of joint meetings on both senior official and minister levels (NCM, 2007:32). Primary topics are: education, research, innovation, economy, cluster-cooperation, creative industries, environment, climate and energy, human trafficking, HIV/Aids, police and justice, cross-border cooperation (NCM, 2010). However, with the Baltic States accession to EU and NATO activities in this forum ceased during the last years (Birkavs/Gade, 2010: 1) and the *närområdspolitik* experienced – similar to the EU’s ND – a re-orientation towards Russia, Kaliningrad and Belarus and was finally re-named as neighbourhood policy in 2005.

A third and relatively neglected area of the Nordic countries is the southern shore of the Baltic Sea with Poland and Germany. Recently Poland has at least partly been integrated into Nordic Baltic Sea Policy, in contrast to cooperation with Germany which takes place on either bilateral or European level (Schymik, 2011b: 71-77).

3.2.3 Nordic Regional Policy

Apart from this specific focus on the Baltic Sea Region, the Nordic countries also established a Nordic regional policy that is supposed to support cooperation on the local and regional level.

Conceptually, Nordic regional policy is based on the idea that the Nordic countries share specific basic features such as relatively small population, high levels of welfare and education, open economic systems, “their location in the northern periphery, long distances and dispersed habitation, a hostile climate and poor accessibility” while their densely populated areas resemble the metropolitan areas in the heart of Europe facing the same “challenges for planning, sustainability, and economic development” (NCM, 2005: 29). Today, Nordic regional policy focuses on two sorts of activities: cooperation

⁷³ In the abbreviation NB8 ‘N’ stands for Nordic and ‘B’ for Baltic. ‘8’ stands for the five Nordic countries plus three Baltic States.

⁷⁴ To meet on equal grounds meant, for the Baltic States, also to materially contribute on equal grounds and thereby to strengthen their influence and their ownership within single projects (NCM, 2004: 7).

across borders and the common development of knowledge and exchange of experience (NCM, 2013: 4.)

Historically, Nordic regional policy dates back to the Helsinki Agreement in 1962. However, the first action programme, with regard to regional policy, was not passed until 1972. In the same year regional policy became further formalised as the *Nordiska ämbetsmannakomitté för regionalpolitik* (NÄRP)⁷⁵ was founded on the initiative of the NCM (NCM, 1987: 22).

In 1975, first financial funding was provided and in 1979, an agreement on cross-border cooperation between local municipalities came into force, which until today is the legal basis for cross-border cooperation in the Nordic countries. As important issues for cooperation, the following topics were fixed: every-day life, environment, medical supply, transport and tourism. In the same year, the NCM agreed upon a cooperation programme which gave impulses for further cross-border agreements (Östhol, 1996: 71). That way, the Border Regional Committee became “the oldest branch of Nordic regional policy cooperation” (NCM, 2005: 42).

However, Nordic Regional policy-making was not an isolated process – similar to the European level, the NCM carried out a re-orientation from project to programme funding and doubled the budget for regional policy between 1985 and 1988 from 11.1 to 22 million Danish Crowns. According to these new rules, cross-border organisations had to hand in an annual programme and a corresponding financial plan. Instead of approving single projects, the NCM decided to base the programme documents on an annual grant. The cross-border organisations themselves decided on the single projects to be funded (Johansson, 1999: 30).

For the programme period 1990-1994, it was agreed upon that Nordic interregional cooperation was primarily to be of cross-border character. The NCM further decided that an operative programme for cross-border cooperation, including new rules for the allocation of funds, was to be established for the programme period 1992-1994. The aim was to revise the entitled regions, to define clearer priorities for financial funding and reform the allocation of funds (Johansson, 1999: 30).

⁷⁵ The *Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy* is a group of public servants from all Nordic countries that jointly work on the issue of regional policy.

Finally, the political change in the early 1990s, in particular Sweden's and Finland's accession to European Union in 1995 and the EU's eastern enlargement in 2004 had consequences on Nordic regional policy both in quality and quantity. First of all, the number of border regional projects in the area covered by the Nordic Institutions, has multiplied since 1995 (NCM, 2005: 42). Moreover, the 2004 enlargement created the need for an even better coordinated and accentuated common position of the Nordic countries in order to safeguard their voice being heard in the EU.

Changes in quality regard the transition from an inner Nordic oriented regional policy to an open regional policy also considering the EU perspective and the near abroad. In addition, Nordic regional policy has increasingly been regarded as a tool to coordinate the Nordic countries' position in order to speak with one voice on the European level and to become a driving force in the further development of European regional policy (NCM, 2013: 5).⁷⁶

In a nutshell, we can state that since the end of the 1980s there has been increasing convergence of European and Nordic regional policy with regard to content as well as the operative level. Even if some of the Nordic countries have remained outside the European Union until today, there is "every indication that even in the future, the Nordic cross-border co-operation will proceed in step with that of the [European (M.S.)] Union" (Lindström/Veggeland, 1997: 145).

Finally, one of the main and long-term activity fields financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers is cross-border cooperation. In that context, the systematic work on the reduction of border hindrances within a functionally connected region and the provision of support for sustainable development, innovation and growth have a long tradition (NCM, 2013: 13). Among the case studies, it is only the Oresund Region that receives regular funding from the NCM for its participation in the common work for the reduction of border hindrances.

⁷⁶ But also the Nordic countries successfully exerted influence on EU's regional policy. They remarkably contributed to the establishment of goal 6 that refers to the population density in the regions (NCM, 2013: 6).

3.3 Conclusion

This overview has shown that cross-border cooperation is localised in a wider context, influenced by international processes like regional integration, specific regional policies and strategies and their developments. In case of the BSR, there are two international actors of importance with regard to regional policy, the EU and the NCM, which are characterised by significant and changing cross-references and interrelations and which serve very specific ends.

These two organisations stand for specific paths of cooperation and a specific dimension of territorial shaping that define the actors' conceptual, political and material background. While the Nordic context provides more a bottom-up conception of cooperation, the EU's role is more of formal character, providing more explicit rules, guiding lines, techniques and funds (top-down). Apart from that, both forums developed specific policies towards the Baltic Sea Region, like the NCM's 'närområdspolitik' and the EU's BSRI, ND and EUBSRS, which were translated into specific operative programmes and projects. However, from a cross-border perspective, cross-border cooperation in the BSR is primarily EU driven.

This accentuated role of the European Union is generally a consequence of accelerated European integration around the turn of the millennium but also of the success of Europe's regional policy. European regional policy has turned into an important tool to implement ideas and strategies on the sub-state and cross-border level and to give important incentives for cooperation, not least providing considerable funding. Moreover, important reforms and the continuous revision of regional policy added a bottom-up dimension through an inclusive programming strategy, which helped to increase both its legitimacy and effectiveness.

It is not surprising that from an outer perspective, Nordic cooperation today plays the second fiddle, while generally having more backing from an internal perspective - often being regarded as a prolongation of the domestic political agenda. In contrast to that, Brussels and the EU are perceived as the other more important political level where the Nordic countries compete for the attention of the larger member states (Sundelius/Wiklund, 2012: 26-29).

Ever since the Northern enlargement in 1995, it has become hard to clearly distinguish the Nordic and the European sphere. Nordic self-perception today is often influenced

by European policies. But even in face of this strong EU influence, the idea of a Nordic community is perpetuated. That makes it necessary to include Nordic cooperation in order to be aware of the long experience with regional cooperation and their sense of community. These immaterial aspects are very important, especially as funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers is rather meagre compared to the EU's volume of financial resources. "In terms of money, Interreg funding is 20 times that allocated by the Nordic Council of Ministers to the Nordic Border Regional Secretariats" but it is very interesting that a "considerable proportion of the NCM allocations are used as a lever for releasing Interreg money to Nordic cooperation ventures" (NCM, 2005: 43). Thus, Nordic funding is used as a catalyst to generate more funding from EU sources and helps to reduce financial barriers in the early phase of project formulation.

In the context of proceeding European Integration, the self-perception of the Nordic countries has been changing, too. On the one hand, EU programmes have a large influence (NCM, 2005: 30) and Nordic regional policy has gone through adaptation processes but on the other hand, the NCM tries to be proactive, to use the established structures in order to profile the region as extraordinary progressive and innovative in regional policy-making and thus also in order to gain profile on the European level (NCM, 2009: 58-59).

Regarding the case studies, all of them have profited from EU regional policy; the Nordic countries fully since 1995⁷⁷ and Estonia gradually through the specific assistance and accession programmes until its EU accession in 2004. Among the respective case studies, only the Oresund case has received funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers' regional policy programme.

Now, having explored the main specificities of the international background of cross-border forms of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, the next chapters will go into detailed case studies and explore the individual specificities of the three cases selected.

⁷⁷ In contrast, Norway has basically participated in the INTERREG programme on equal footing since 1995 – at the invitation of Finland and Sweden. The only exception is that Norway as a non-EU member does not receive funding from the INTERREG programme while the other partners are eligible, that way the EU gives an incentive to cooperate for at least one partner.

4. Öresundsregionen (Oresund Region)

Long before the region-building project around the Oresund started, first plans to build a fixed link across the Oresund between the cities of Elsinore and Helsingborg were made. Already in 1886, a French railway consortium proposed the construction of a railway tunnel and in the following decades repeatedly, plans for a fixed link were elaborated (Idvall, 1997: 46).

Politically, the early 1950s became an important milestone for the region-building process, as the Nordic Council passed the recommendation to build a fixed link between Denmark and Sweden already during its founding session in 1952. According to Torsten Stein, this is of extraordinary relevance because as long as the circle of bridge supporters was restricted to a private consortium, it was relatively easy for the national governments to object to the project. Through the commitment of the Nordic Council, the project was of interest for all the Nordic countries and could not be ignored any longer by the Danish and Swedish governments (Stein, 2000: 46).

Moreover, during that period of growth and welfare in the 1950s and 1960s, which was the starting point of today's regionalisation, the image of the *Örestad*⁷⁸ was coined. The positive economic development and the increase in population within the region during that period were the breeding ground for the idea that the two cities Malmö and Copenhagen would grow together sooner or later. It inspired city planners and also others to publish drafts for this mega-city to come. During the structural crises in the heavy industries and shipbuilding in the 1970s, the fundament for those ideas vanished, and consequently, the interest in building a fixed link decreased as well. Those negative developments form the basis for the regionalisation project, which was launched in the 1980s and 1990s (Stein, 2000: 47-51; Wieslander, 1997: 124; 1999: 249).

Yet the crucial factor for a tighter networking across the Oresund was the geopolitical turmoil in the beginning of the 1990s, changing the regional frame of reference entirely

⁷⁸ The term *Örestad* respectively *Ørestad* (engl.: Örecity) describes the utopia of a mega-city around the Oresund that was developed during the 1950s and 1960s. While the term has an ambivalent meaning in Swedish it has been reinterpreted on the Danish side. Today, *Ørestad* in Danish stands for a new district of the city of Copenhagen, which is built on the island Amager with a tight transport connection to the Oresund bridge (Schönweitz, 2008: 81 footnote 20).

and having northern and eastern enlargement of the EU as a consequence. Moreover, the EU was a well-established, powerful protector of the idea of regionalisation on the international level and could safeguard the process. These new circumstances changed regional policy on both the European and the Nordic level and paved the way for the decision to build a fixed link taken in 1991.

This again changed the prevailing conditions for institutional cooperation decisively and therefore regional actors wanted to give a clear signal and replaced the two existing cross-border organisations in the region, the *Oresund Council* (Öresundsrådet) and *Oresund Contact* (Öresundskontakt)⁷⁹ with a new institution, the *Oresund Committee* (Öresundskomiteen).

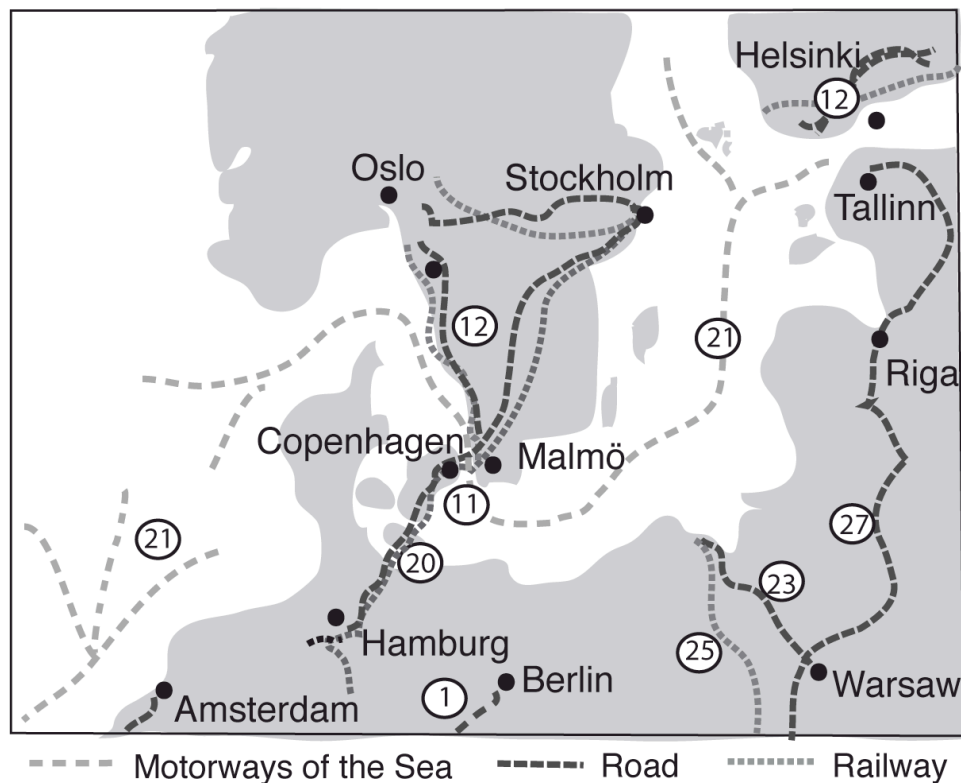
The Oresund Council was a body of 30 elected members from local and regional municipalities across the Oresund and was founded in context of the vision of a modern and sophisticated Oresund region (Erlingsson, 2001: 26; Andersen, 1999: 76). Its task was to present issues concerning the overall Oresund region to regional, local, governmental and other organisations.

In contrast to that, Oresund Contact goes back to the *NÄRP* founded by the NCM in 1973. This committee was supposed to work for a balanced regional development in the North and thematically concentrated on cross-border regions among the Nordic states and aimed at improving the preconditions for the Nordic internal market and to contribute to the establishment of functional cross-border regions (Stein, 2000: 82). In that context, an Oresund Group within the Committee for Regional Policy was established and was to be supported by the contact office Oresund Contact, which was supposed to strengthen social, cultural and economic cooperation across the Oresund and was primarily financed by the NCM (Stöber, 2004: 42). Until the early 1990s, both bodies worked with each other on different issues of cross-border relevance. It turned out rather problematic for both bodies that they strongly relied on the decision to build a fixed link – a decision to be taken at the national level where they only had indirect influence (Hall/Sjövik/Stubbergaard, 2005: 34).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Öresundskontakt was established by the Nordic Council in order to establish contacts between business and press and to stimulate cultural and economic cooperation between Scania and Sealand. (For more details see Erlingsson, 2001: 27).

⁸⁰ Along with these two bodies there was cooperation with regard to water protection in the *Oresundsvattenkomiteen* (1960-1974) that was replaced by the *Oresundskommission* in 1974. This cooperation was handed over to the regional and local municipalities in 1992 and

New Dynamic was brought into the regional process in 1983 when the *European Round table of Industrialists* (ERT) was founded under the aegis of the former VOLVO CEO Per Gyllenhammer. In the following year this body published the report *Missing Links*, indicating the fixed Oresund link and the extension of the railway track Malmö-Oslo as well as the construction of a fixed link across the Fehmarn belt as missing transport infrastructure in the European transport network (Stein, 2000: 79; Ek, 2003: 22). In the same year, a Nordic variant of the ERT the *Working Group for Wider Economic Cooperation* (*Arbetsgruppen för utvidgat ekonomiskt samarbete*) was founded. It stressed the need for a reduction in transport time between the Nordic countries and the European mainland. The consortium *Scandinavian Link*⁸¹, founded in 1986, also pursued this super-ordinate goal.



Own figure based on a detail from: European Commission 2005, 12. See also Schönweitz, 2013: 131.

Figure 3: Ten-T Priority Axes in Northern Europe

continues since then under the label *Öresundsvattensamarbetet* (oresundsvand.dk; 19.August 2013, 11:18).

⁸¹ The shareholder of Scandinavian Link A/S were the 55 largest private companies and financial institutions in Scandinavia (Hedegaard Sørensen, 1993: 30)

Figure 3 TEN-T priority Axes in Northern Europe shows the single components of the Scandinavian link as displayed in the EU's Ten-T priority policy. Number 20 indicates the fixed Fehmarn-Belt link, number 11 the Oresund link that opened in 2000, number 12 describes the so-called *Nordic Triangle*, the rail and road transport axes in the hinterland of the Oresund link connecting Denmark to the Scandinavian peninsula, southern Sweden with Stockholm and Oslo, and vice versa.

The initiative of large industrial enterprises and the fixed link's new pan-European dimension were crucial in bringing the fixed link back on the political agenda at the end of the 1980s. Finally, in 1991, the Swedish and Danish government signed the treaty to build the fixed link. In 1995, construction started and regional political players used the opportunity and took the initiative to replace the two existing regional bodies with a new institution: the Oresund Committee (*Öresundskomiteen*). Thus, the fixed physical link paired with its potential positive effects for regional development became the basis for the region-building process across the Sound. Today, it takes about 34 to 40 minutes to go from central Copenhagen to central Malmö.

The next chapter provides an analysis of the Oresund Committee as the official regional political structure, as well as its member organisations and their background in order to identify specificities in the process of the institutionalisation of the Oresund region.

4.1 Institutional Structure of the *Oresund Committee*⁸²

The Oresund Committee is a political cross-border platform for local and regional municipalities from the Swedish and the Danish part of the Oresund region. Its aim is to safeguard legitimacy and *folkelig forankring*⁸³ of the integration process in the overall region. It is supposed to strengthen the region's profile nationally and internationally, to work for a good foundation for more growth in the region, functional integration and sustainability and to strengthen the common social and cultural identity as well as represent the region's interests (*Öresundskomiteen*, 2007).

The institutional development of the Oresund Committee can be divided in two major

⁸² This chapter is, to a large extent, a revised summary of my magister thesis, which I published in a concentrated form in the article *The Öresund Committee: Cross-border institution-building in the Baltic Sea Region* (NORDEUROPAforum, 2008 (2), pp. 75-94).

⁸³ The term *folkelig forankring* stands for a democratic-participatory understanding of the region-building process (Schönweitz, 2008: 77 footnote 4).

periods, the first one lasting from 1993 to 2006 and the second from 2007 until today. In the first period the Oresund Committee had a three partite structure, consisting of the Oresund committee (*Öresundskomiteen*), the Oresund Commission (*Öresundsudvalg*)⁸⁴ and the Oresund secretariat (*Öresundssekretariat*).

The Oresund Committee takes the basic decisions and meets at least twice a year. Until today, it has consisted of an equal number of political representatives from the respective national parts of the region. In the earlier years, it was supplemented by the *Öresund Commission* composed of at least one civil servant per member and having wide preparatory functions. Together with the *Secretariat*, which primarily had administrative duties, the *Öresund Commission* was responsible for the implementation of taken decisions until 2007 (Schönweitz, 2008: 83).

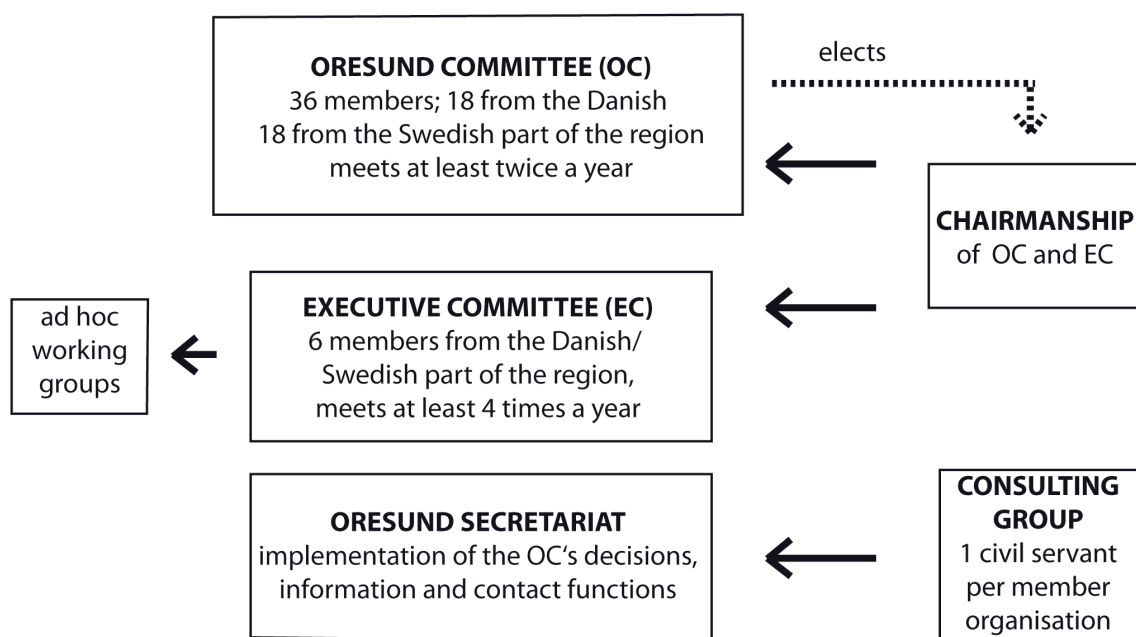
Apart from this relatively stable basic structure, minor adaptations were made during that period until 2007. For example, the number of members increased when new members were accepted (1999) or when public administration reforms in the respective countries made a review necessary (1998, 1999).

The institutional reform of the *Öresund Committee* in 2007 stands in the context of an almost permanent and hardly fruitful discussion on the internal structures since its foundation and local government reform in Denmark. The new administrative structures in Denmark have changed the structure and competences of local and regional actors as well as local policy-making significantly and have made an adaptation of the structures inevitable.⁸⁵ Together with the expressed wish for a less administrative but more political cross-border forum, regional politicians took the opportunity of a more comprehensive structural reform of the Oresund Committee.

Figure 4 gives an overview of the *Organisational structure of the Oresund Committee* since 2007. The Oresund Committee has remained the highest decision taking body within the institutional structure. In the context of the Danish local government reform new regional bodies and municipalities had to be incorporated into the Committee. As a consequence, the number of representatives in the Committee went up from 16 to 18 on each side and the total number of ordinary members from 32 to 36.

⁸⁴ Here the term *Öresund Commission* describes one of the components of the institutional structure of the *Öresund Committee* and not the successor of *Öresundsvattenkomitéen*, exclusively concerned with water protection (Schönweitz, 2008: 83 footnote 29).

⁸⁵ Chapter 4.1.1.2.1 provides more information on local government in Sweden and Denmark.



(own figure)

Figure 4: The Organisational Structure of the Oresund Committee since 2007

Among its members, the Oresund Committee elects the Chairmanship, which is both the chairmanship of the Oresund Committee and the Executive Committee at the same time. The Executive Committee serves as the board of the Oresund Committee and meets at least four times a year. Today, the Öresund Committee decides on fundamental issues while the Executive Committee handles current questions. This change in importance is also reflected in the frequency of the meetings, as the Öresund Committee meets from that time on at least twice a year, while the Executive Board meets at least four times a year (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: § 4-5).

In the new statutes it remained unspecified to what extent the Executive Committee may take decisions. However, a certain influence from the Öresund Committee on the Executive Committee is secured as it defines the rules for the Executive Committee's internal procedures.

Being in charge of the implementation of the decisions and doing the preliminary work for the Executive Board and the chairmanship, the Secretariat is formally strengthened. The former Öresund Commission, which used to be of high importance due to its preparatory function, was altered into a consulting group of civil servants for the Secretariat and the new Executive Committee. Thus, the new Executive Committee seems to be the most visible outcome of the aim to make the arena more political and

less administrative. The role of the Executive Committee is further strengthened through its capacity to establish ad hoc working groups (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: § 5, sec 4).

The changes on Danish local government are also reflected in the *Member Structure of the Oresund Committee*. Table 4 groups the member organisations of the Oresund Committee according to their national backgrounds in the columns and their affiliation to the local or regional level in the rows (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: § 4, sec 2), while figure 5 gives an overview of the geographical localisation of its member organisations.

Table 4: Member Structure of the Oresund Committee

	Denmark		Sweden	
Regional	Region Hovedstaden Chairman of Region Hovedstaden	7 1	Region Skåne	12
	Region Sjælland Chairman of Region Sjælland	3 1		
Local	Chairman of the City of Copenhagen's City council	1	Malmö Stad	2
	Mayor of Frederiksberg Kommune	1	Helsingborgs Stad	2
	Mayor of Regionskommune Bornholm	1		
	Chairman of the Municipal Contact Council Region Hovestaden	1	Lunds Kommun	1
	Chairman of the Municipal Contact Council Region Sjælland Further representative	1 1	Landskrona kommun	1
	Total	18	Total	18

While parity among the local and the regional level has been a permanent feature in the Swedish part of the Oresund region, the idea of the Oresund Committee as an organisation based on regional entities had been very powerful on the Danish side until the system as such was challenged by the 2007 local government reform. In face of the

new responsibilities with regard to regional planning which reduced the regional level to a coordinating function, it appears rather interesting that at least with regard to the Danish representatives, the position of the regional level within the structure of the Oresund Committee remained relatively strong and that the new balance did not gravitate more towards the local level. Moreover, it is rather interesting that some of the Danish representatives participate in the Oresund Committee due to their political post in their respective home institution.



(own figure)

Figure 5: Membership of the Oresund Committee Geographically

Today, the Danish and the Swedish part comprise 12 representatives for the regional level and six representatives for the local level. Three of the Danish representatives of the local level stand for the former dual municipalities of Copenhagen, Frederiksberg and Bornholm and the representatives of the Municipal Contact Councils bundle the potentially also diverging interests of the single local municipalities.

On the Swedish side, the larger cities within the region, Malmö, Lund, Helsingborg and Landskrona have been represented in the Oresund Committee since its foundation, while minor local municipalities were not represented. With the specific and clear division of labour between the local municipalities and Region Skåne, their non-hierarchical organisation did not make an adaptation necessary. Moreover, it seems uncontested on the Swedish side that – in particular the larger cities – should be represented.

Table 5: Member Structure of the Oresund Committee's Executive Board

	Denmark		Sweden	
Regional	Chairman of Region Hovedstaden	1	Chairman Region Skåne	1
	Further Representative of Region Hovedstaden	1	Further Representatives of Region Skåne	2
	Chairman of Region Sjælland	1		
Local	Chairman of the Municipal Contact Council Region Hovedstaden	1	Mayor of Malmö Stad	1
	Chairman of the Municipal Contact Council Region Sjælland	1	Two of the Mayors of Helsingborg, Landskrona and Lund in rotation	2
	Chairman of the City of Copenhagen's City Council	1		
	Total	6	Total	6

Structurally, the introduction of an *Executive Board* of six members per national side, meeting at least four times a year, was the most basic innovation in 2007. Table 5 gives details on the *Member structure within the Executive Board*. It shows that membership within the Executive Board is formally tied to specific political posts in the regional and local bodies represented. This includes for example, the chairmen of *Region Hovedstaden* and *Region Skåne* or rotating representation of the Mayors of Helsingborg, Lund and Landskrona (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: §5, sec. 3).

Comparing member structure of the Oresund Committee and the Executive Committee,

it is remarkable that the balance between local and regional representatives in the Oresund Committee is twelve to six on the Danish and the Swedish side, while there is parity among the regional and municipal bodies in the *Executive Committee*.

Moreover, there is a structural concentration of power regarding the chairman of the *Öresund Committee* being chairman of the *Executive Committee* at the same time. The role of the *Öresund Committee* is weakened while the position of the chairmanship is strengthened by its double function. Moreover, the chairmanship takes over the task of appointing the director (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: § 6, sec 2).

The most striking structural challenges for the Oresund Committee is based on on the duality of diversity and consensus. Generally, decisions in the Oresund Committee are to be taken in consensus and are of binding character. On the other hand, consensus may be hard to reach due to its member's diversity as Copenhagen and Lolland/Falster or Landskrona potentially have rather different perspectives on specific issues. The lack of formal sanction mechanisms again makes it difficult to guarantee the implementation of common decisions and makes consensus the most important precondition for implementation. Under the old structures these difficulties were circumvented informally through the application of the principle of a variable geography.

The financial basis for the Oresund Committee is regulated in paragraph nine of the statutes. It says that it is financed by the member organisations and that the financial contribution of the Danish and the Swedish parts are regulated according to the share of population. The division of these two amounts among the member organisations on the respective national side is regulated among the Danish and Swedish members respectively. In addition, the Oresund Committee can apply for funding from other sources (Öresundskomiteen, 2007: § 9). In 2009, the Oresund Committee had a budget of about 12 million Danish Crowns (1,6 million Euros); the major parts are financial contributions by its member organisations (Öresundskomiteen, 2009: 35).

4.2 Members of the Oresund Committee, their Domestic Background and their Strategies

In cross-border context, political actors from different cultural and political backgrounds meet. Depending on their institutional origin, they may have varying competences, duties, interests and strategies. In addition, they are part of specific cultures of negotiation and decision-making within their respective nation-state, which are usually perceived as given and are hardly contested in a domestic context. These differences come to the fore when confronted with diverging cultural practices in another country, for example in cross-border decision-making.

The next chapter explores the territorial background of the single actors in the Oresund Committee providing an overview and comparison of Swedish and Danish local government, before summarising the interests and strategic background of the single member organisations of the Oresund Committee.

4.2.1 Local Government in Sweden and Denmark

From a superordinate perspective, the administrative structure of both countries shares specific similarities; both Sweden and Denmark are unitary states characterised by both a strong central and a strong local level. The central state level is responsible for overarching topics like security or foreign policy and defines the guidelines for domestic policy, while the local municipalities are responsible for most of the welfare services. Both countries have an administrative system that is organised on three levels, the local, the regional and the national level. Most striking differences, however, can be found in the interrelation between those three levels. During the last 20 years, the administrative structures both in Sweden and Denmark were rearranged remarkably. Until today Swedish local government has been based on three widely independent administrative levels: county councils, county administration boards and local municipalities (Fitschen, 2004: 16). While the county administration boards are central state agencies for the regional level and have no direct democratic legitimacy, the county councils are elected bodies that are 80 per cent in charge of the public health care system; they are concerned with business development, education and culture and some social services but to a lesser extent (OECD, 2003: 157). The regional and the local level are in no hierarchical relation but stand side by side (Petersson,

2005: 18).

Generally, the fields of activity of local self-government comprise two areas: (1) tasks assigned to the local and county level by communal law and (2) tasks based on specific legislation. In practice, tasks are often shared in accordance with the share of the population, e.g. health care requires a larger share of the population and therefore in most cases was handed over to the county level (Glißmann, 2004: 77). Moreover, there are several other arrangements like municipal associations for specific policy fields.⁸⁶

The formal division of tasks includes that municipalities have a wide range of activity fields such as social services, school, planning and building matters, environment and public health protection, refuse collection and waste management, water and sewage, rescue services, civil defence, library services and housing. Voluntary tasks comprise leisure and culture, technical services, energy provision, and street maintenance. Shared mandatory tasks between the local and the regional level are regional and local public transport. In contrast, the mandatory tasks of the regional level only comprise health and dental care for young people up to 20 years of age, voluntary tasks may range from culture and education, to tourism (Regeringskansliet, 2005: 11).

This system basically persists until today, with two exceptions: *Region Skåne* and *Västra Götalands Region*. These two exceptional regional bodies go back to the pilot project - the so-called *regionsforsöket* - launched by the Swedish parliament in 1997.⁸⁷ The aim was to regionalise the Swedish administrative system. This coincided with the fact that in particular in southern Sweden, the border drawn between the regional entities *Malmöhus* and *Kristiansstad län* was increasingly perceived as artificial and out-dated and as a hindrance for a strong and independent representation of Scania's

⁸⁶ Stegmann McCallion describes the situation of the regional political level in Sweden as a 'regional mess', a complex form of cooperation between actors and political levels. She identifies alone 40 different central state actors on the regional level and points to 38 different regional 'maps' (Stegmann McCallion, 2008: 580).

⁸⁷ Most interestingly, the pilot project also included two other regions with different cooperation models in Gotland and in Kalmar County. After the evaluation, the government preferred the Kalmar model, which foresaw the establishment of regional cooperation bodies, meaning the Government could decentralise tasks. However, this met "resistance from politicians in West Götaland and Scania Regions; the two regions to which the new system meant a downgrading to ordinary, mainly health care providing county councils" (Bäck/Larsson, 2008: 212). Their intervention had the consequence that the pilot project was prolonged in these two regions and finally became permanent in 2011. In contrast, Kalmar and Gotland turned into Regional Development Councils in 2002 (Stegmann McCallion, 2008: 585). Thus, today, Region Skåne and Västra Götalandsregion, are comparably strong regional entities that widely correspond to the European understanding of the regional level.

interests on both the national and the European level (Wieslander, 1997: 120).

In that context, three county councils in west Sweden and the City of Gothenburg merged in Västra Götalands Region and two counties in southern Sweden and the City of Malmö merged into Region Skåne. In agreement with a general tendency for decentralisation that had started already during the 1960s, the regional model cases received responsibility for health care and primarily regional development (Blomqvist/Bergmann, 2010: 47) that were originally localised within the County Administrative Board, the central state administration on the regional level. This means that tasks were primarily transferred from the central state to the new regional entities (Wångmar, 2005: 70). Today, the tasks of the regions comprise public health, regional economic development, cultural affairs, public transport, infrastructure and social planning, regional planning, environmental and climate issues, research and development, the allocation of EU funding, representation of interests, information and communication as well as supra-regional and international contacts.⁸⁸

But also on the Danish side, a remarkable public administration reform was implemented in 2007. Until then, 275 local and 14 regional municipalities composed Danish local government, including two so-called *amtskommuner* that were of dual character. These three levels were characterised by a hierarchical relationship with overlapping competences. The primary tasks of the county level were hospitals, secondary school education, overarching regulating and planning. Local municipalities were in charge of nursery and kindergarten, primary school, social services and care of the elderly (Nannestad, 1999: 87). The 2007 reform primarily transferred tasks from the former regional authorities to the national level and the local municipalities.

The most obvious change that the 2007 public administration reform brought was geographical consolidation of public administration. 271 local municipalities merged into 98 large municipalities and five regions replaced the former 14 regional municipalities (Blom-Hansen/Heeager, 2011: 224).⁸⁹ In the Danish part of the Oresund region, the regional municipalities of Frederiksborg, Copenhagen and Bornholm fused to create *Region Hovedstaden* and the regional municipalities of Storstrøm,

⁸⁸ http://www.skane.se/sv/Press/Fakta_om_Region_Skane/ (30. April 2013, 10:36). http://www.skane.se/sv/Om_Region_Skane/Styrande_dokument/ (30. April 2013, 10:37).

⁸⁹ For more details on the impact of the 2007 local government reform in Denmark on local politics see Kjær, Ulrik/Hjelmar, Ulf/Leth Olsen, Asmus, 2010: Municipal Amalgamations and the Democratic Functioning of Local Councils: The Case of the Danish Structural Reform, *Local Government Studies*, 36 (4), pp. 569-585.

Vestsjælland and Roskilde merged to create *Region Sjælland*.

Additionally, another regionally relevant organisational structure was dissolved in that context – the so-called *Hovedstadens Udviklingsråd* (HUR; Greater Copenhagen Authority) – that had been established in 1999 in order to overcome the coordination deficits of the then existent structures. Its task was to better coordinate the capital region in the fields of regional planning, traffic planning, cooperation across the Oresund and regional economic policy as well as culture and tourism. Being an indirectly elected body and lacking its own financial resources it did not have a strong standing (OECD, 2009: 216). With the local government reform, HUR's tasks and duties were handed over to other organisational structures (Schönweitz, 2008: 89).

The central responsibilities of the new regions established in 2007, are health services and regional development and planning, public transportation firms, environment and tourism. This may, at first sight, appear rather similar to the former structure but the reform's rather radical character comes better to the fore when taking a closer look at the new administrative rules and financial control, and their consequences for policy-making on the regional level.

With the local government reform, the health care sector became the regional level's genuine field of activity. In all other fields it has primarily coordinating [!] competences. This counts in particular for regional development policy, which is to be coordinated by the regions through the Regional Growth Forum (RGF; *vækstforum*). These RGFs go back to the law on business development (*lov om erhvervsfremme*)⁹⁰ and were established in order to bring the relevant actors from business, education, local and regional administration as well as employees and employers together and coordinate them. Their main tasks are to develop an overall strategy for regional development in the specific region, to provide analysis of the region and to support projects within the region that help to implement the strategy.⁹¹ In addition, they are particularly important, as they are also the bodies within which politicians negotiate the allocation of financial means.

Moreover, the regional level's primary focus on health care services has remarkable

⁹⁰ The text of the law is available on: <https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=134802> (20. June 2013, 10:17).

⁹¹ <http://www.regionh.dk/vaekstforum/Menu/Opgaver/Lovgrundlaget.htm> (21. March 2013, 12:39).

consequences on regional policy-making, as the regional level has no committee system “which makes for less specialization and professionalization among politicians, reduced distribution of power, and more concentration of influence with the regional chairman, the only full-time regional politician in the new system” (Blom-Hansen/Heeager, 2011: 236).

The fact that the regions’ area of responsibility is confined to tasks explicitly mentioned (Law 537, § 5, 2) also hinders an informal expansion of the regional level’s scope of action. Taken together with the fact that the regional level in Denmark lost its right to raise taxes, a weak regional level must have been one of the main goals of the Danish local government reform.

Since 2007, the budget of the regional level relies on the fees that the municipalities pay for the use of regional social institutions and hospitals as well as “grants from both the central and the municipalities” (Blom-Hansen/Heeager, 2011: 229). In addition, the regional level cannot create debts if not allowed by the central government.

In contrast, tasks and duties of the local level were widened considerably having the consequence that “[i]n terms of functions, the Danish municipalities today are stronger than ever” (Blom-Hansen/Heeager, 2011: 227). Apart from the classical duties like child care, primary education, care for the elderly, the administration of social transfers, utilities, culture and recreation, the local municipalities inherited a number of functions from the former counties: specialised social services, health care prevention, maintenance of regional roads, and environmental protection. However, this transfer of more overarching issues from the regional to the local level increases the need for more inter-municipal coordination. Therefore, the municipalities’ national association

“has set up five new Municipal Liaison Committees [Kommunekontaktråd, KKR, (M.S.)], one in each region, consisting of the mayors of the municipalities in the regions and a number of council members. Their aim is to enable the municipalities to match the regions in negotiations, primarily by establishing a common negotiation position” (Blom-Hansen/Heeager, 2011:235).

Thus, local government reform in Denmark did not really improve the preconditions for metropolitan coordination. It still “is a delicate task, considering the need for the cooperation of municipalities that sometimes have conflicting interests, and the limited amount of policies at the region’s disposal” (OECD, 2009: 217). If then the cross-border

perspective is added, local government reform in Denmark has remarkably increased complexity in cross-border decision making, raising transaction costs on the Danish side due the greater need for domestic coordination in the context of the larger number of parties involved. However, on the more informal level it has become apparent that the regional level still plays a major role in specific areas – not due to formal competence but due to know-how and capability. Therefore, regional development and regional cooperation is still a task mainly exercised and influenced by the regional level.

In summary, there was a period of time between 1997 and 2007 in which Danish and Swedish local and regional municipalities were rather similar with regard to competences and duties, while the 2007 reform increased territorial heterogeneity. In order to further disentangle the complex setting in the Oresund region and particularly the Oresund Committee, the next chapter explores the individual actors involved and their strategic background for and interests in cooperation across the Oresund.

4.2.2 City of Copenhagen (Københavns Kommune)

While the city of Copenhagen is the uncontested economic centre of Denmark, the overall Danish political landscape is characterised by a divide between the capital and the other areas of the country, resulting in an imbalance between the capital's economic importance and its political under-representation in the Danish parliament (OECD, 2009: 220-222).

The 2007 local government reform and the loss of the status as a dual municipality additionally weakened Copenhagen's position. Today, the capital is one among the 98 local municipalities in the annual budget negotiations "represented by the Association of Municipalities, which, as a Denmark-wide organisation, does not take a strong interest in developing the case for particular regions or areas" (OECD, 2009: 219).

Copenhagen faces specific challenges like housing shortage, unemployment, public transport and a shortage of qualified workers. Some of these issues are of truly domestic character, while in others, solutions can be found in cooperation across both the administrative borders within Denmark and across the Oresund.

Within the administration of the city of Copenhagen, the conceptual background of the field of international cooperation has changed remarkably during the last decade.

While in former times, cooperation per se was perceived as a goal, the 'added value' of cooperation increasingly came into focus. Thus, the general cuts in public spending in Denmark can be regarded more as a trigger rather than a reason for the general reconsideration of the municipalities' international cooperation that had Copenhagen's withdrawal from the *Baltic Development Forum*⁹² and *BALTMET*⁹³ as a consequence. The main argument was that cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region had been of high interest during the 1990s, but that it was of no priority for the city at present.

Today, international cooperation is seen as a cross-sectional task, which is initiated where it is regarded as useful or necessary. This also corresponds to the fact that the city of Copenhagen has no specific international strategy for the time being. Much more, the terms of reference for regional and transnational cooperation can be distilled from the city's overall development plan, saying that the city concentrates on functionally oriented forms of cooperation that are supposed to create growth for the city.⁹⁴ Thematically, green growth and climate are in focus.

In addition, the city of Copenhagen has strategic partnerships with Hamburg, Berlin and Malmö. Apart from initiatives with regard to economic policy, cluster and urban development, cooperation with Hamburg primarily concentrates – not least in face of the coming fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt and the need for better hinterland connections on the German side – on infrastructure. Compared to Hamburg, cooperation with Berlin has lost its importance during the last years. For the time being, cooperation with Berlin focuses on the field of creative industries and culture.

From a political perspective, the Oresund dimension is no uncontested regional reference point for the city of Copenhagen as its weight strongly depends on the priorities of the main political actors. Under the aegis of Ritt Bjerregaard, mayor of

⁹² The *Baltic Development Forum* was established in 1998 with the aim of bringing regional players and decision makers from the Baltic Sea Region together in order to discuss strategic questions in the context of regional development. For more detailed information see <http://www.bdforum.org/> (2. May 2013, 15:30).

⁹³ *BALTMET* (Baltic Metropolises) is a network consisting of capitals and major cities of the Baltic Sea Region states. Its main aim is to enhance innovativeness and competitiveness in the BSR by bringing partners from the cities, business and academia together. For more information see <http://www.baltmet.org/> (2. May 2013, 15:34).

⁹⁴ For example Copenhagen participates in *C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group* a cooperation forum for cities that defined ambitious goals for the reduction of Carbon dioxide emissions (<http://www.c40cities.org/>; 2. May 2013, 15:36) or *Eurocities*, a network of cities concentrating on information exchange on local planning and all other relevant issues for cities as well as lobbying towards the EU (<http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/home>; 2. May 2013, 15:38).

Copenhagen from 2005 to 2009, Oresund cooperation was not a very high-ranking issue. This changed remarkably when Frank Jensen took over in 2009.⁹⁵ Apart from that, the changes in local government reform, the attached loss of the special status of the city of Copenhagen and the adaptation of the national electoral system in that context further weakened Copenhagen's representation in the national parliamentary system and might also have helped to make the Oresund perspective more attractive, providing an alternative channel in order to become heard on the national level.

Generally, Copenhagen's awareness of the potential and the need for the cross-border perspective in particular regarding cooperation with Malmoe has obviously been raised considerably during the last decades and in particular during the last five years. Today, Copenhagen sees itself as part of the Oresund region and identifies specific areas it can benefit from, if Copenhagen and Malmoe grow together and develop into a coherent and sustainable metropolis.

This of course is to be achieved in accordance with Copenhagen's general political priorities – first and foremost to improve living quality and to become carbon neutral in 2025. These specific relations between Malmoe and Copenhagen are also reflected in a joint vision for both cities serving as a leitmotiv for the local development plans of both cities (see also Excursus: A common vision for Copenhagen and Malmoe).

4.2.3 City of Malmoe (Malmö Stad)

Together with the city of Copenhagen, Malmoe composes the urban core of the Oresund region. Seen both from the Swedish national and the European perspective, Malmoe is located at the edge rather than the centre. Therefore, the city of Malmoe regards it necessary to undertake large efforts to become visible on the different political levels. In that context, Oresund cooperation is regarded as a good means to present Malmoe and to make it more interesting and exciting.

Apart from the well-established cooperation with the city of Copenhagen, Malmoe's international cooperation generally concentrates on urban policies like sustainable urban development, environment and increasingly also sustainable social development. Compared to former times, Malmoe's international cooperation has

⁹⁵ Berlingske Tidende: Svenske borgmestre: Danmark har svigtet, 12. July, 2010. (<http://www.b.dk/danmark/svenske-borgmestre-danmark-har-svigtet>; 5. September 2013, 10:52).

increasingly become functional and issue-oriented. Oresund cooperation fits this more functional approach very well and covers the general priorities for international cooperation, while being primarily regarded as a regional forum.

Geographically, Malmö's focus is southwards on developments in the Fehmarn Belt region, the STRING area and more recently Hamburg (Malmö Stad, 2012: 18). Against this background, Malmö works together with partners from Germany for an INTERREG programme that covers the whole STRING area. Accordingly, the Scandinavian Arena, which takes more a Northern perspective, is not as important, although the city of Malmö attentively observes developments in that forum, like the *Coinco North*⁹⁶ project.

Within Oresund cooperation, the city of Copenhagen has top priority. As regards content, the ESS⁹⁷, labour market, housing and real estate, and growth in general are in focus. A very important project with regard to the future of public transport are plans about the so-called *Öresundsmetro* which would connect both city centres and relieve the Oresund bridge, which is very close to being maxed out with rail traffic (Malmö Stad, 2012: 3, 8, 19, 25, 43).

The Oresund Committee is, in that context, perceived as an important channel to push Malmö's interests on the national level. For example, the Oresund Committee's participation at the *Almedalsveckan*⁹⁸ in Visby is regarded as being very important as it helps to show the developments in the Oresund region and to increase the awareness for the regions' needs in the national political arena. Being located in the national periphery, it is increasingly perceived of high importance to be present in Stockholm

⁹⁶ The Coinco North as an INTERREG IVA project is a successor of an COINCO Interreg IIIB project, which had a wider European dimension, describing a corridor of innovation and cooperation covering the axis from Oslo southwards to the Adriatic Sea. After the completion of the INTERREG IIIB project, two successor projects Coinco North and Scandria were established. Coinco north covers the northern axis from Oslo to the Oresund region and was funded by the newly established Interreg A programme Kattegat-Skagerrak-Øresund from 2009-2011 (<http://www.interreg-oks.eu/en/Menu/Projects/Project+List+%C3%96resund-Kattegat-Skagerrak/COINCO+North>; 8. July, 12:41).

⁹⁷ The acronym ESS stands for European Spallation Source. The ESS is a Pan-European project where 17 European states jointly invest in a research facility using the neutron scattering technique, which helps to further detect the composition of all kinds of materials (<http://europeanspallationsource.se/>; 21. October 2013, 13:44).

⁹⁸ The term *Almedalsveckan* is composed of the Swedish word 'vecka' for week and the name of the park 'Almedalen' in Visby, the main city on the Swedish island Gotland. Taken together, they stand for an annual meeting, where representatives from Swedish political parties, interest organisations, enterprises and media discuss political and societal issues.

(Interview).⁹⁹ Similar to Copenhagen, Malmö's local development plan also bases a large part of its vision for 2030 on the idea of an integrated and successful regional process in the Oresund region. The next section provides a summary of the common vision that builds the backbone for Malmö's and Copenhagen's planning documents.

Excursus: A Common Vision for the Local Development Plans of Malmö and Copenhagen

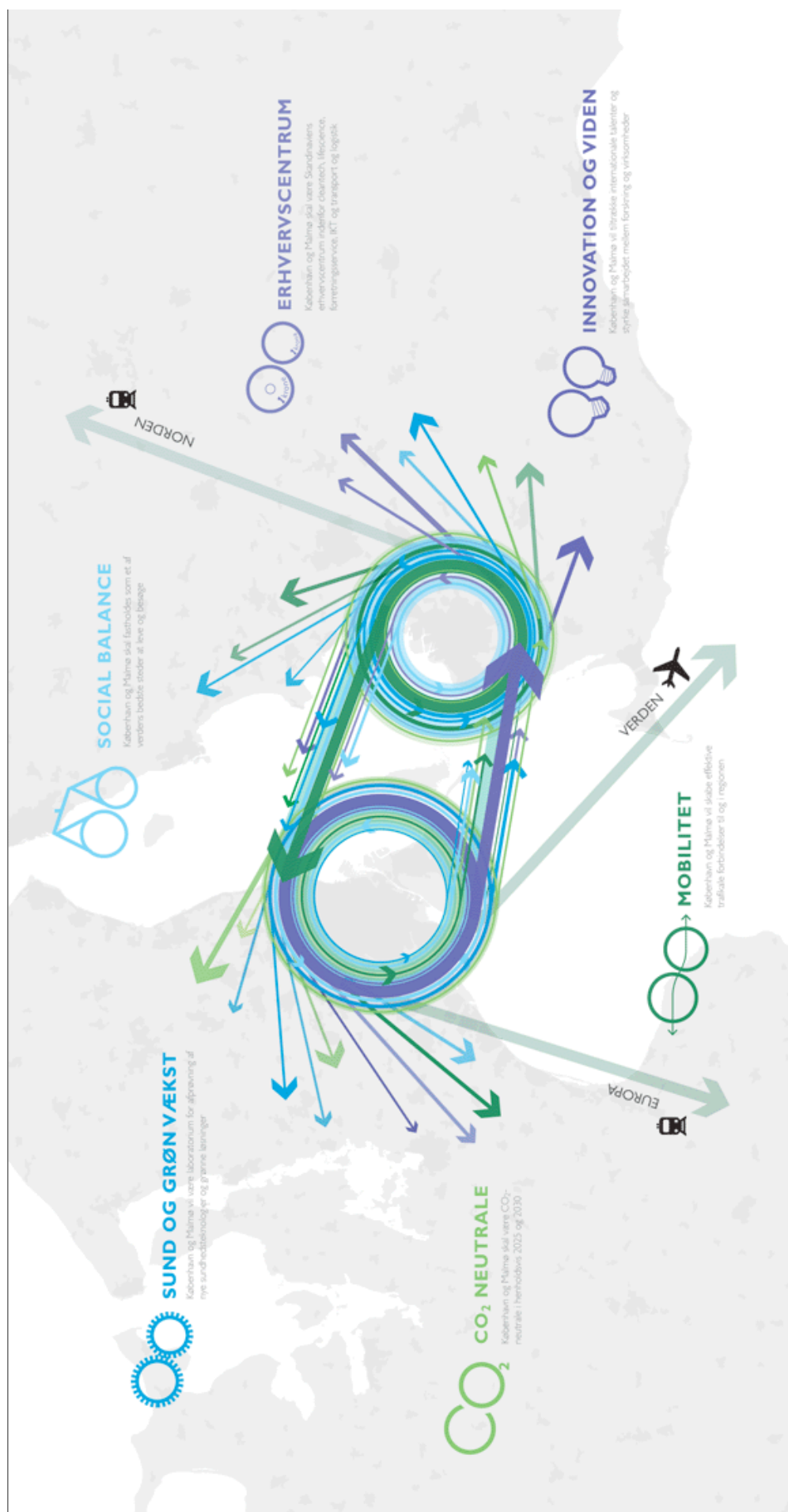
Copenhagen's and Malmö's current local development plans are based on a joint vision reflecting their role within Oresund cooperation. This common understanding is a symbol for the strong awareness of the importance of the Oresund dimension for local development and stands for a common effort to turn this perspective into an inherent part of the local political and administrative system of both cities. The common vision provides interesting insight on how both cities perceive each other, their division of labour and their self-localisation within Oresund cooperation.

Figure 6: Vision: In 2025 and 2032 respectively, Copenhagen and Malmö will be an integrated metropolis¹⁰⁰. This is a comprehensive visualisation of the common vision for both cities. This illustration regards both cities basically as the motors or gearwheels for regional development in the Oresund region.

The overall vision is that Copenhagen and Malmö will be an integrated metropolis where growth and life-quality go hand in hand. Social balance and the further development of health technology and green solutions are to be achieved through increasing amounts of, and better work with social innovations, the strengthening of wind power, regenerative energies, and clean tech enterprises in the Oresund region. Moreover, the region's green profile is strengthened through the arrangement of more international conferences about climate, energy and environment, and the ambitious goal that Copenhagen and Malmö will be the first carbon neutral border region in 2025 and 2030 respectively (Københavns Kommune, 2011: 8; Malmö Stad, 2012: 24).

⁹⁹ This has been particularly important since the former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson left office. He used to live in Malmö and thus was well informed about the developments in Scania.

¹⁰⁰ The varying year dates stem from the cities' individual publications. Accordingly, Copenhagen and Malmö date the realisation of the vision differently, while there is consent regarding its contents.



Source: Malmö Stad, 2012: 8-9. Københavns Kommune: <http://subsite.kk.dk/sitecore/content/Subsites/KP11/SubsiteFrontpage/GroenVaekstOgLivskvalitet/OeresundsregionenEnMotorForVaekst.aspx> (19.August 2013, 14:03)

Figure 6: Vision: in 2026 and 2032 Respectively, Copenhagen and Malmoe will be an Integrated Metropolis

The Oresund perspective is an integral dimension in both development plans, and in both documents it already appears in the first section. Copenhagen's development plan describes the cities' future as follows:

“København-Malmø skal være en sammenhængende og bæredygtig metropol der skaber vækst både i Øresundsregionen, Danmark og Sverige. Når der skabes vækst i byerne, smitter det på den omkringliggende region og på hele nationen. Med hver sine styrker komplementerer København og Malmø hinanden og styrker Øresundsregionens vækstmuligheder, øger konkurrenceevnen samt fastholder Øresundsregionen som et attraktivt sted at leve og besøge. København-Malmø er de to tandhjul, der driver motoren frem. Et tredje tandhjul på motoren er på vej, nemlig Hamborg, som København vil udbygge sit arbejde med i 2011” (Københavns Kommune, 2011: 6).¹⁰¹

These first sentences of Copenhagen's development plan, right after the Mayor's foreword, give a comprehensive impression of the high importance assigned to the Oresund perspective for the city's future development. A strong partnership between the cities of Copenhagen and Malmö is regarded as a core precondition for a positive development of the overall region. Specific cooperation areas for both cities are: social balance and green growth, mobility and carbon neutrality, economy, neutrality and knowledge.

With regard to cooperation with Copenhagen and the Oresund perspective, Malmö's local development plan includes passages of similar content and partly also similar wording:

“Öresundregionen ska vara en motor för grön tillväxt och en plats där tillväxt och hög livskvalitet går hand i hand. Köpenhamn-Malmö ska vara en sammanhängande metropol som skapar ekonomisk dynamik i både Öresundsregionen, Sverige och Danmark (...). I ett större regionalt sammanhang ska Öresundsregionen dra nytta av Fehmarn Bält-förbindelsen och utveckla ett samarbete med Hamburg” (Malmö Stad, 2012: 18).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ *Copenhagen-Malmö shall be a connected and sustainable metropolis that creates growth both in the Oresund region as well as Denmark and Sweden. When growth is created in the cities it has spill over effects on their surrounding regions and the whole nation state. Copenhagen and Malmö complement each other with their strengths. They strengthen the growth potential of the Oresund region, raise competition capacity and maintain the Oresund region as an attractive place to live and visit. Copenhagen and Malmö are the two gearwheels that run the motor. A third gearwheel is on its way, namely Hamburg, that Copenhagen will deepen its cooperation with in 2011.*

¹⁰² *The Oresund region shall be a motor for green growth and a place where growth and high quality of life go hand in hand. Copenhagen-Malmö shall be a joint metropolis that creates growth both in the Oresund region as well as Sweden and Denmark (...). In a larger regional*

“Med sina olika styrkor kompletterar Köpenhamn och Malmö varandra och stärker Öresundsregionens attraktionskraft och tillväxtmöjligheter” (Malmö Stad, 2011: 24).¹⁰³

In addition to that, Malmö's local development plan also points to the need for an increased cooperation and coordination with the city of Lund (Malmö Stad, 2012: 26-27). It is symbolic to emphasise the Öresund perspective and partnership between Copenhagen and Malmö in such comprehensive strategic documents. The special relationship between Copenhagen and Malmö relies on their physical proximity, which turns Malmö and Copenhagen respectively into an important part of the functional urban area of the other city.

In that context, it is regarded important to establish effective transport connections towards and within the region, in particular the so-called *Öresundsmetro*, an underground line connecting the centres of Malmö and Copenhagen, and the region's integration into the European high-speed train network through a faster connection towards the South (Malmö Stad, 2012: 19; Københavns Kommune, 2011: 10).¹⁰⁴ Particularly the better connection towards Northern Germany would also strengthen the existing flight destinations and help to attract more international direct connections to Kastrup Airport (Malmö Stad, 2012: 24; Københavns Kommune, 2011: 6).

Furthermore, it is seen as important to exploit the potential of the large investments in regional research infrastructure through the construction of the ESS and Max IV¹⁰⁵ (Malmö Stad, 2012: 25; Københavns Kommune, 2011: 10). It is regarded necessary to reduce barriers for entrepreneurs in the region as well as to attract and maintain international talents and qualified workforce. Moreover, the aim is to bring 1200 regional enterprises together in order to generate combined capital investments in development projects for economy and growth areas (Malmö Stad, 2012: 25). The

context, the Öresund region shall profit from the fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt and develop cooperation with Hamburg.

¹⁰³ *With their different strengths, Malmö and Copenhagen complement each other and strengthen the attractiveness and growth potential of the Öresund region.*

¹⁰⁴ Copenhagen's local development does not directly speak of an *Öresundsmetro* but of the need to consider a “ny direkte og højklaset forbindelse mellem de to byers centrum” (*a new direct and high-class connection between the two city centres*; Københavns Kommune, 2011: 14).

¹⁰⁵ Max IV lab is a synchrotron radiation facility that is being built in Lund. Together with the ESS, it forms the basis for a research cluster on material science in the region (<https://www.maxlab.lu.se/>; 21. October 2013, 13:51).

region is to become Scandinavia's economic centre for cleantech, Life Science, corporate services, IT, transport and logistics (Københavns Kommune, 2011: 6).¹⁰⁶ From a wider regional perspective, it is particularly interesting that the vision introduces Hamburg as the third gear wheel.

4.2.4 The Capital Region (Region Hovedstaden)

In context of the implementation of the Danish local government reform in 2007, four regional entities merged in the new regional municipality Region Hovedstaden, which had to develop and define its priorities in all fields of activities. Already the regional development plan from 2008 and particularly the regional development plan from 2012 provide a good insight on the self-understanding of the regional municipality. The 2012 regional development plan is the umbrella for four minor planning documents¹⁰⁷ and thus the most comprehensive planning document of this new regional entity.

Within the regional development plan, the international and regional perspective is presented as a cross-cutting topic within regional administration. Moreover, Region Hovedstaden emphasises the instrumental aspect of international and regional cooperation, focussing on its added value, concrete common projects, and exchange of ideas or learning. The self-understanding and self-localisation of Region Hovedstaden in a domestic and regional context is reflected in the following excerpt:

“Hovedstadsregionen er en international metropol med afgørende betydning for vækst og udvikling i hele Danmark. Den position ønsker Region Hovedstaden fortsat at styrke. Men vi vil også gerne gå foran, give Nordeuropa et nyt gear og være et forbillede for bæredygtig vækst, viden og livskvalitet” (Region Hovedstaden, 2012: 2).¹⁰⁸

In this passage, the Capital Region emphasises its importance on the national level, with regard to the national economy, population and the ratio of highly skilled workers.

¹⁰⁶ Malmö indicates almost the same areas to gain profile, however, not with a reference to the Scandinavian context and adding new media, tourism, trade and head offices while leaving aside corporate services and IT (Malmö Stad, 2012: 20).

¹⁰⁷ These documents are: the economic development strategy of Vækstforum Hovedstaden 2010, Region Hovedstaden and Kommunekontakttrådet Hovedstadens climate strategy 2012, Region Hovedstadens regional education strategy, transport agreement between Region Hovedstaden and KKR Hovedstaden 2011.

¹⁰⁸ *The Capital Region is an international Metropolis of decisive importance for growth and development in the whole of Denmark. The Capital region further wishes to strengthen this position further. It also wants to proceed and give Northern Europe new impulses and be a model for sustainable growth, knowledge and living quality.*

The basic argument is that economic growth in the Capital region has spill over effects on the whole country – therefore it is rational for the whole country to strengthen the development in the Capital region.

Apart from the national importance, Region Hovedstaden also points to its potential in a northern European perspective, by bringing a new dynamic, and new impulses to northern Europe as a forerunner in areas like sustainable growth, knowledge and living quality (Region Hovedstaden, 2012: 2).

Generally, international cooperation is supposed to strengthen Region Hovedstaden's position both nationally and internationally. Among its international contacts, the Oresund region has priority, as it provides an important tool to gain profile on the international stage. Region Hovedstaden alone would not play any role on the international scene but together with its core partner in regional and cross-border issues, Region Skåne, and the Oresund perspective, it can significantly enhance its visibility. From Region Hovedstaden's point of view, internationalisation has both a northern European and a global aspect. The fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt provides new opportunities for cooperation across the Baltic Sea towards Northern Germany, particularly in the STRING corridor, as well as Oslo and Stockholm (Region Hovedstaden, 2012: 5).

The Fehmarn Belt fixed link together with the new research facility European Spallation Source (ESS) in Lund and Copenhagen respectively, to be opened in 2020, can turn into the basis of a larger international cooperation with similar research facilities in Hamburg in the field of Material and Life science. To safeguard and further develop its position both internationally and nationally, Region Hovedstaden aims to become an initiator and supporter for an intensification of international cooperation between universities, municipalities and enterprises, and within the region itself but also across the Oresund. One important initiative aims at formulating a strategy on how to use the ESS and other prospective research facilities for the benefit of the region and the future development of clusters (Region Hovedstaden, 2012: 14).

Other important topics in the regional development plan are: business, education, climate and traffic. Moreover, it is very interesting that the publication constructs cooperation in the Oresund region as a catalyst for the development of forms of regional cooperation in northern Europe, for example cooperation in Scandinavia with

Gothenburg, Oslo and Stockholm and also in the Fehmarn Belt corridor with Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg (Region Hovedstaden, 2012: 5).

4.2.5 Region Zealand (Region Sjælland)

Region Zealand is an amalgamation of three former regional municipalities of Roskilde Amt, Storstrøms Amt and Vestsjællands Amt and bundles more rural areas within the Oresund region. This is also reflected in the fact that regional average income per person is slightly below Danish national average but relatively far from the income in the Danish Capital Region.¹⁰⁹ Based on these figures and other indicators like educational level or investments etc., the regional development plan formulates many ideas and plans on how to further regional economic development; amid these, cross-border and transnational cooperation play an important role.

Among the former three entities that fused in Region Zealand, it was particularly Storstrøms Amt, close to the German border, that had a strong international orientation. After a period of transition in the context of the local government reform, international cooperation became more intensive, in particular during the last years. Today, international cooperation has turned into a crosscutting issue, focussing on issues like climate, the reduction of carbon emissions, green growth and renewable energy, education and labour.

Geographically, Region Zealand conceptualises itself in a central position between Northern Germany, the Danish Capital Region and Jutland. Hence, good relations to its environs are important as well as good connections to, from and within the region indispensable for a positive regional development and that asks for openness, cooperation and intercultural competences. Functional ties towards the Danish Capital Region are particularly strong through the common housing and labour market (Region Sjælland, 2012: 19/20) as one fourth of the labour force within region Zealand commutes to the Danish Capital region (Region Sjælland, 2008: 11).

This intermediary position between the two large metropolitan areas of Hamburg and Copenhagen, Eastern and Western Denmark, Scandinavia and remaining Europe has

¹⁰⁹ While the average regional income in Denmark in 2011 was 286,645 DKK, it was about 281,006 DKK in Region Sjælland and 312,386 DKK in the Capital Region (own calculation based on the data provided on Statistics Denmark (www.dst.dk; 27. May 2013, 11:25)).

great potential for regional development as reflected in the subsequent excerpt from the regional development plan:

“Region Sjælland skal aktivt udnytte sin placering som bindeled i udviklingskorridoren mellem Øst- og Vestdanmark, Skandinavien og resten af Europa til at fremme den regionale udvikling. Regionen indgår i en række aktiviteter vedrørende infrastruktur, erhvervsudvikling og arbejdskraftens mobilitet på tværs af grænser med danske og udenlandske regioner. *Region Sjælland vil udnytte mulighederne i at være central placeret i udviklingskorridoren Hamborg, Berlin, København, Stockholm og Oslo og dermed i udviklingen af Østersøregionen*” (Region Sjælland, 2012: 9).¹¹⁰

Moreover, this passage vehemently points to the need of political action in order to benefit from the inherent potential of this specific localisation, not least as the Fehmarn Belt fixed link has a high impact on the region’s accessibility and opportunities. Still, regional actors are quite aware of the danger of becoming a transit region. In order to avoid such a development, regional actors claim two stops in the region’s area when establishing a high-speed railway. Not least, therefore, the region participates in a set of activities in fields of infrastructure, economic development and labour mobility. International cooperation is regarded as a fruitful perspective that the region generally wants to strengthen between enterprises and citizens, primarily in the close cross-border areas like Fehmarn, Oresund, STRING and the Baltic Sea but also other parts of the world (Region Sjælland, 2012: 9).

The decision to construct a fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt finally taken in 2008, somewhat turned the region’s attention from the Oresund towards the Fehmarn Belt. Still, Oresund cooperation is equally important from the Region Zealand’s point of view not least as many citizens live in Region Sjælland and commute to work in the Copenhagen area.

Generally, Region Zealand has a fairly wide perspective on the field of international cooperation, with signs of concentration on strategic regional partnerships but also including participation in transnational forums like the BSSSC and the BDF. For Region

¹¹⁰ *Region Sjælland shall actively use its localisation as a link between Eastern and Western Denmark, Scandinavia and the remaining parts of Europe in order to further regional development. The region participates in many activities regarding infrastructure, business development and labour force mobility across borders with Danish and foreign regions. Region Sjælland will take advantage of the opportunities, being located in a development corridor Hamburg, Berlin, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo, and consequently the development of the Baltic Sea Region.*

Zealand, the Baltic Sea context is of superordinate importance; not least as European structural policy and the INTERREG programme are based on the EUSBSRS, and are important funding sources for the initiation and continuation of cross-border and transnational cooperation.

4.2.6 Region Skåne

Region Skåne is one of the most densely populated areas in Sweden and is characterised by a strong concentration of the population in its western part, while rural structures prevail in its east. In its regional development plan, Region Skåne aims to become an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable region and defined five fields of regional action: to strengthen Skåne as a knowledge-based region, social and economic inclusion, environmental and climate protection, accessibility, further integration into the Oresund region (Region Skåne, 2009: 14-16).

Furthermore, a vision for the region in 2016 was formulated. This passage provides important insight on how the region sees itself, its aims and goals and the tools to be used in order to turn this vision into reality. First I will focus on the aims and goals before I later on direct attention to the tools indicated.

“Visionen om det livskraftige Skåne är att Skåne finns i centrum i södra Östersjön och Öresundsregionen är en självklarhet. Mångfald ger möjligheter, hela Skåne växer och det är här de spännande jobben finns. Skåne är en magnet för kreativiteten, det finns starka internationella forskningsmiljöer och vi är världsledande i miljö- och klimatfrågor. Det finns ett varierat boende för alla behov och önskemål, spännande kultur och häftiga evenemang. En stark sammanhållning och tillit präglar Skåne, samverkan är ett honnørsord.” (Region Skåne 2009: 6).¹¹¹

The first sentence of this excerpt provides a geographical self-localisation for the future that sees Skåne as a part of the Oresund region in the centre of the Southern Baltic Sea Region. Under the umbrella of the Oresund region, Region Skåne regards itself as a growth motor for regional development in the Southern Baltic Sea Region. Particularly

¹¹¹ *The vision of a viable Skåne sees Skåne in the centre of the Southern Baltic Sea and the Oresund region has become self-evident. Diversity provides opportunities, the whole Region Skåne grows and it is here you can find attractive jobs. Skåne is a magnet for creativity, there are strong international research communities and it is world leading in environment and climate issues. Here you can find a variety of lodging possibilities for all needs and wishes, exciting culture and great events. A strong sense of cohesion and trust characterises Skåne, and cooperation is a prestige word.*

its proximity to the markets in the Southern Baltic Sea Area like Denmark, Northern Germany and Poland, and its central location in Scandinavia and the so-called Nordic Triangle have the potential to further develop Skåne as Sweden's gateway to the continent. The construction of the tunnel across the Fehmarn Belt and the fixed link between Helsingör and Helsingborg will further strengthen its intermediary position (Region Skåne, 2009: 8).¹¹²

The next sequence of the text refers to the challenge of diversity. Diversity covers a broad range of features within the Region Skåne, ranging from the high number of foreign migrants to their above average exclusion from the labour market, and the urban rural divide. These challenges are to be handled in order to safeguard an ongoing positive regional development. Diversity, together with a better social cohesion, combined with a further strengthened international research community thanks to the ESS and cultural offerings are key factors that are supposed to continuously turn Region Skåne into an attractive place to live and work. Moreover, Skåne is supposed to profile as world lead in environment and climate issues.

Another key factor for an ongoing positive development is an increased integration in the Oresund region:

“Integrationen i Öresundsregionen måste öka. Skånes potential kan stärkas ännu mer om integrationen över Öresund fortsätter och fördjupas. Målet är en gemensam bostads-, arbets- och utbildningsmarknad. För att nå dit måste alla väsentliga gränshinder i Öresundsregionen undanröjas. Bland annat krävs bättre samordning av prognos- och planeringsverksamhet samt ett ökat främjande av vardagsintegrationen.” (Region Skåne, 2009: 6).¹¹³

This passage presents Oresund cooperation as an important tool to strengthen regional development in Region Skåne, and simultaneously points to the deficiencies of cross-border cooperation. Only if cooperation across the Sound is strengthened, can Skåne make use of its full potential. This is also tied to specific fields like a common housing, labour and training market, the reduction of border hindrances, coordination of prognosis and planning activities, as well as increased every day integration. In this

¹¹² This position points to conflicting regional interests as Malmö and Copenhagen prefer to include Malmö in the metrosystem.

¹¹³ *Integration in the Oresund region must increase. Skånes potential can be strengthened even further, if cooperation across the Oresund continues and is deepened. The aim is to establish a common housing, labour and professional training market. In order to reach this, all substantial border hindrances have to be removed. Among others there is also need for a better coordination of prognosis and planning activities as well as a better integration of every day life.*

manner, the vision for Region Skåne is presented as being closely interlinked to the future development of the Oresund region.

The main argument for the significance of the Oresund perspective is that Region Skåne as a substantial part of the Oresund region with its altogether 3,7 million inhabitants gains influence on the European level. Without this cross-border dimension, the single parts of the Oresund region and in particular Region Skåne would hardly be perceived as significant partners in the European sphere. Against this background, Oresund cooperation has become a crosscutting issue and a natural part of political and administrative every day business in Region Skåne.

Region Skåne regards the common labour market and the reduction of cross-border hindrances, rail, road and public transport, and research and development as the most important issue of cross-border cooperation. In that context, the EU is perceived as an important channel that can help to develop the free movement of workers.

4.2.7 Helsingborgs Stad

Helsingborg is the second largest city in the Swedish part of the Oresund region and central to in the northern part of the region. As a complement to the other larger cities within the region, like Copenhagen, Malmö and Lund, Helsingborg sees its contribution to Oresund cooperation in coordinating its northern part and working for a more balanced regional development (Helsingborgs Stad, 2010: 35).

This self-understanding of being a coordinator and growth motor in the northern part of the Oresund region is also underlined by the city's close contacts with the Danish city of Elsinore (Helsingør) on the opposite shore of the Oresund. The basic idea behind *HH-samarbejde* (HH-cooperation) founded in 1995, is that Elsinore and Helsingborg complement each other and that cooperation between both cities helps to strengthen the northern part of the Oresund region.¹¹⁴ Both cities cooperate in many different policy fields such as infrastructure, economy, water and environment and both signed a cooperation agreement including a budget of about 2.5m DKK for common projects. Moreover, the HH-cooperation also is a lobby organisation and a network that works

¹¹⁴ For more detailed information see *HelsingørHelsingborg, 2012: En sammanbunden stad 2035: Strategi for samarbejdet mellem Helsingør og Helsingborg* http://www.helsingorkommune.dk/Omkommunen/Internationalt%20samarbejde/HH_samarbejdet.aspx; 28. May 2013, 15:27).

for a fixed link across the northern Oresund, particularly in prospect of the construction of the fixed Fehmarn link and the expected rise in transport.

Generally, regional cooperation in the city of Helsingborg is seen as a tool to reach the city's aims, to generate knowledge and learn from others - and as an important factor for the city's future. Helsingborg appears to be aware that overall regional development is important for its own success, and regards it also as crucial to support other local municipalities in their development (Helsingborgs Stad, 2010: 15). The most important topics for international cooperation are urban renewal, environment, sustainable development and particularly infrastructure, such as the fixed link between Helsingborg and Elsinore and its funding through the EU's TEN-T programme, the extension of the railway network, in particular the completion of the so-called *Västkustbanan*¹¹⁵, and the future inclusion in a high-speed train network that will link Helsingborg with Gothenburg, Oslo and Hamburg (Skåne NordVäst, 2012: 2).¹¹⁶

Furthermore, the local development plan 2010 (*översiktsplan 2010*) gives an impression of why the city of Helsingborg regards it as important to participate in the Oresund cooperation and how to profit from it:

“Helsingborg måste stärka och utveckla sin roll i såväl närregionen som i Öresundsregionen, för att vara en intressant stad att leva och verka. I det fortsatte integrationsarbetet är det avgörande för städerna i regionen att definiera sina inbördes roller för att kunna få ut optimalt av samarbetet. Här ligger även utmaningen att fortsätta komplettera och stödja varandra vad gäller näringsliv, arbets- och bostadsmarknad, utbildning, kultur, turism och infrastruktur” (Helsingborgs Stad 2010: 12).¹¹⁷

Helsingborg conceptualises its regional context in addition to the strong emphasis on the Oresund region, through several regional forums for cooperation, like Region

¹¹⁵ *Västkustbanan* stands for 'west coast railway' and describes the railway connection between Gothenburg and Lund, which is being extended to a double track until 2015 (<http://www.trafikverket.se/Privat/Vagar-och-jarnvagar/Sveriges-jarnvagsnat/Vastkustbanan>; 11. June, 12:00).

¹¹⁶ As the process of transition seems not to be fully completed, adaptations may become relevant at short notice. For updated information please consult the homepage of Familje Helsingborg (<http://www.familjenhelsingborg.se/>; 11. June 2013, 11:07).

¹¹⁷ *Helsingborg has to strengthen and develop its role both with regard to its near surroundings and the Oresund region, in order to be an interesting city to live and work in. The continuing work of integration is decisive for the cities in the region to define mutual interests in order to get the optimum out of it. Exactly here, is the challenge to continuously complement and support each other with regard to economy, labour and housing market, education, culture, tourism and infrastructure.*

Skåne, Skåne NordVäst¹¹⁸ and the Helsingborg Business Region (HBR), a regional business development agency founded in 2009. In 2013, Skåne NordVäst and HBR joined under the label *Familjen Helsingborg*. While Familjen Helsingborg is now the platform for outward communication in tourism and business development, political and planning decisions are still to be taken among the politicians represented in Skåne NordVäst.

With regard to regional cooperation, Helsingborg has a strong focus on transport infrastructure and accessibility. Thus Oresund integration is regarded as an important aspect to further develop transport infrastructure to prepare for and meet the expected increasing demand for transportation services in context of continuing Oresund integration. The fixed HH link, a high-speed railway and a nationally important port are expected to further strengthen the position of Helsingborg as an important centre for travel and logistics (Helsingborgs Stad, 2010: 36). With regard to logistics, particularly the capacity to provide multi modal services is expected to be of high importance.

4.2.8 Landskrona Stad

Among the members of the Oresund Committee, Landskrona Stad is the smallest local municipality, with 41,000 inhabitants. Landskrona is an important place for culture, recreation, work and city life in the middle of Scania (Landskrona Stad, 2012a: 11). In the 1970s and 1980s, the city was seriously hit by the crisis in the ship-building and heavy industries, the consequences of which have been reflected in its comparably high unemployment rate and its vacancy until today.

Landskrona is a natural part of the Oresund region, not least due to its waterfront location, but has so far not been able to considerably profit from increasing regional cooperation and growth. The local development plan describes the situation as follows:

”Bakgrunden till arbetet står att finna i den outnyttjade potential som finns i Landskrona tätort. Öresundsregionen har under de senaste decennierna expanderat med en ökad attraktionskraft och tillväxt. Även fortsättningsvis spås Öresundsregionen få en positiv utveckling, med merparten av befolkningsökningen på den svenska sidan. Landskrona är beläget i de centrala

¹¹⁸ Skåne NordVäst bundles 11 local municipalities in the north western part of Region Skåne. It is about coordination, resource bundling and increasing the region's attraction, not least for employers. Priority areas are infrastructure and social planning, education, research and innovation, business development, human resources, dissimilarity and diversity, and culture and public relations (<http://www.skanenordvast.se/>; 11. June 2013, 10:25).

delarna av regionen med en god tillgänglighet till övriga delar och ett attraktivt läge längs med Öresundskusten. Trots detta har staden tappat mark på en lång rad områden. Ett par tusen arbetstillfällen har försvunnit och bidragsberoendet har ökat. Kombinationen av en snedvriden bostadsmarknad och ett stagnerat näringsliv har varit förödande för Landskrona” (Landskrona Stad, 2012a: 8).¹¹⁹

Against this background, the local development plan aims to give Landskrona’s development new impulses, to use its potential and to couple the city with the positive development in the Oresund region. The idea is to profit from this intermediary position between the two regional gravitation centres Malmö-Lund and Helsingborg. Particularly the construction of the ESS is expected to raise the need for more cooperation with Malmö and Lund. Being located between two larger city regions, Landskrona is expected to provide attractive, alternative housing opportunities for both young families as well as aged and young people. The Oresund region provides an umbrella used by the city to attract new investments and enhance the development of a diversified economy where new creative businesses develop together with modern industries (Landskrona Stad, 2012b: 7).

As international cooperation and the Oresund region are subsumed in the city’s department for economic and destination development, tourism is another important field of regional action, for example in the INTERREG IVA project with Bröndby and Svalöv and the Copenhagen Business School about the potentials and competitive capacity of smaller sites in urban areas with regard to tourism.

Apart from regional cooperation across the Oresund, Landskrona has more substantial bilateral relations to the Danish city Glostrup and the Norwegian city Frederiksstad, due to some specific project work, while there are also other bilateral contacts of a more symbolic character.

Looking from a bird’s eye view, Landskrona sees many potential areas for cooperation across the Oresund. Thus, the most important point is to decide where to invest the

¹¹⁹ *The background for this piece of work is to find the unused potential in the densely built up area of Landskrona. The Oresund region has been expanding during the last decades through its attraction and growth. Even in the future, the Oresund region is expected to grow and a large part of its growth in population is expected in the Swedish part of the Region. Landskrona is centrally located within the region, with good accessibility to other parts of the region and an attractive location at the shore of the Oresund. Nonetheless, the city has lost ground in many fields. The combination of a distorted housing market and a stagnating economy has been devastating for Landskrona.*

municipality's resources. In that context, the INTERREG programme has an important enabling role through the provision of additional funding.

4.2.9 Lunds Kommune

Lunds Kommune is the third largest city in the Swedish part of the Oresund region. Both within the Oresund region and Sweden, Lund is an important location for higher education, research, innovation and entrepreneurship (Lunds Kommun, 2010: 11). A map in Lund's local development plan presents its regional frame of reference in concentric circles, ranging from the Malmoe-Lund region to Scania, the Oresund Region and in a wider context, the southern Baltic Sea Region.

Major infrastructure investments in Lund's surrounding areas, like the Oresund bridge and the city tunnel in Malmoe, have improved Lund's accessibility remarkably as transport time from Lund to Copenhagen was reduced from 60 to 45 minutes (Lunds Kommun, 2010: 14). As a result of the university, health care and leading firms, Lund provides a large share of qualified jobs in the region. Moreover, the investments in the research infrastructure – in particular the construction of the MAX IV and the ESS – will remarkably improve Lund's standing in the international science community. These investments are expected to give major stimulus to the further development of the city through an increase in population and the need for better public transport. In order to get prepared for the changes to come, new investments in the local transport infrastructure are being made in order to link the new research facility to Lund's city centre and the train station (Lunds Kommun, 2010: 11). This attitude is also reflected in Lund's planning philosophy:

"Lunds kommun har en särställning i Skåne och i Öresundsregionen. Kommunen planeras för en långsiktig utveckling av verksamhetsområden med kunskapsinriktad verksamhet och näringsliv i övrigt. Bostadsområden i staden lokaliseras så att cykelavstånd till arbetsplatser och centrum inte överskrider fem km" (Lunds Kommun, 2010: 15).¹²⁰

In contrast, the Oresund region is not mentioned in the visionary part of the local planning document, here the local development plan refers more to Lund as a world-

¹²⁰ *The local municipality of Lund has an exceptional position in Skåne and within the Oresund region. Local planning takes a long-term perspective on the fields of knowledge-oriented activities and business in general. Residential areas are planned in a biking distance of maximum five kilometres to work and center.*

class place for academic education and research and formulates the aim to become the best place for studies, research and development in Sweden (Lunds Kommun, 2010: 12).

Thus, Lund is primarily focussing on with the preparations for the upcoming large-scale investments. In these processes, the Oresund perspective is important, while the overall goal is more on gaining a profile as a location for Research, Development and Education in the international science community.

4.2.10 Frederiksberg Kommune

Within the city of Frederiksberg, the Oresund perspective appears not to be very accentuated as there is neither individual reference to the Oresund region in the development plan 2010, nor any reference in other strategic documents. However, there are a few references that show that Frederiksberg Kommune still has intersections with Oresund cooperation – first and foremost through its participation in the Oresund Committee, but also with regard to specific projects such as the “Kulturmetropol Øresund 2012-2015”.¹²¹

Still, the profile of Frederiksberg Kommune within the Oresund cooperation is relatively low. One reason could be its very specific location as an enclave surrounded by the city of Copenhagen. This localisation, in addition to Frederiksberg’s strong urban character, of course has consequences on its strategic orientation. With a population of about 100,000 inhabitants to 8.77 square kilometres, it has a population density of more than 11,000 inhabitants per square kilometre. Thus, both physical space and scope for strategic action with regard to attracting investors is rather limited. As a popular place for residence, culture and education¹²², Frederiksberg is an important part of the Danish capital area. Although the regional context might still be considered important, priority is obviously given to enhancing Frederiksberg’s visibility in the neighbourhood of Copenhagen, through urban development that aims at gaining profile as a place for culture, living, and shopping (Frederiksberg Kommune, 2012).

¹²¹ <http://www.frederiksberg.dk/Politik-og-demokrati/DagsordnerOgReferater/Kultur-OgFritidsudvalget/06-05-2013/66ee6d73-11b3-44f5-83ea-1f3dacd80d9a/eee132fe-aa29-4b69-8e47-cd00cb958f57.aspx>; (12. June 2013, 11:11).

¹²² Frederiksberg hosts, for example, the Copenhagen Business School and the faculties of Law and Science of the University of Copenhagen.

4.2.11 Bornholms Regionskommune

Bornholms Regionskommune is the most eastern part of both Denmark and the Oresund Region. From 2003 Bornholms Regionskommune was both a local and a regional municipality, until it was turned into one of the 29 local municipalities that joined to create the Region Hovedstaden in 2007. However, Bornholm has a special status, as the law on business development grants the right to establish an own growth forum to the municipality of Bornholm (Law 602, § 8, 1). Within the local development plan, the Oresund region is hardly a topic. It is only mentioned as a forum for international cooperation (Bornholms Regionskommune, 2012: 51).

Nevertheless, Bornholm has specific interests – with regard to its accessibility – that are strongly interrelated with local and regional planning processes on the mainland, not least due to its outmost position within Denmark and its proximity to the south-east of Region Skåne.¹²³ The ferry between Rønne to Ystad in Sweden provides a great deal of individual and goods transport from and towards Bornholm. Apart from going by plane, this connection via Southern Scania is, today, the fastest and shortest way to go from Bornholm to the Danish capital or Denmark and vice versa.

Particularly the Oresund bridge, combined with a DSB intercity train between Copenhagen and Ystad, or the so-called *Bornholmerbussen* have shortened transport time remarkably since 2000 (Regionskommune Bornholm, 2009: 72). Thus, better transport infrastructure through Scania simultaneously means increased accessibility for Bornholm. From that point of view, a reduction of transit hindrances throughout Sweden is a very important topic for Bornholm, too.¹²⁴

A report on Bornholm in cultural and experience economy, points to Bornholm's low profile in Oresund cooperation and proposes to further develop Bornholm's contacts in the Baltic Sea Region as well as Scania, and to become more integrated into the Region Hovedstaden and the Oresund region:

"Øresundsregionen og hovedstadsområdets udbygning er Bornholms chance når 'fingrene' fra Malmø skal udbygges mod Ystad. Vi skal spille en meget mere

¹²³ Peter Billing's and Tage Petersen's report *På egne ben i nye omgivelser Sydöstra Skåne og Bornholms möjligheter i Öresundsregionen* (2003) investigated this specific localisation and its potential.

¹²⁴ For more information on very practical transit hindrances, see *Marcussen, Carl Henrik, 2003: Undersøgelse af hindringer for transittrafik mellem Bornholm og det øvrige Danmark gennem Sverige, Nexø.*

markant rolle som en del af [Ø]resundsregionens fremtid” (Bornholms Regionskommune, 2006: 49).¹²⁵

Apart from these considerations on transport and infrastructure planning, the overall focus in international cooperation is more on specific problems posed by its character as an island, like decreasing population or vulnerable economic structures.

4.2.12 Kommunernes Kontaktråd

Finally, in Region Zealand and Hovedstaden, so called *Municipal Liaison Councils for Local Municipalities* (*Kommunernes Kontaktråd*) were established to bring smaller local municipalities closer together and to formulate a common negotiation position vis-à-vis the regional level in the regional planning process. In these forums, mayors and a number of council members from the local municipalities meet once a month and discuss regional questions, mostly very concrete issues.

The Oresund region has a difficult standing in this framework for mainly two interrelated reasons. (1) In face of the wide field of local municipal duties, cross-border cooperation is, particularly for the smaller local municipalities, rather far from their everyday business. (2) Due to the different geographical localisation, different political constellations or financial resources, the position of the single municipalities have a diverging tendency. This makes the role of the Municipal Contact Council representatives within the Oresund Committee rather difficult and it is often hard to define a common position among the municipalities, which often puts them, de facto, in an observing or reporting function within Oresund cooperation.

4.2.13 Many Actors – Varying Interests

The overview of the single member organisations’ territorial background and strategic orientation has helped to discover the wide range of interests to be reconciled in Oresund cooperation. The general idea that the whole region benefits from regional cooperation and increasing integration of the Oresund region is today also reflected in the strategic documents of most of the Oresund Committee’s member organisations. Thus, the cross-border dimension of an integrated Oresund region has become an

¹²⁵ *The Oresund region and the expansion of the capital area is an opportunity for Bornholm, when Malmoes ‘fingers’ are to be expanded towards Ystad. We will play a more significant role as a part of the future Oresund region.*

important aspect of most regional actors' strategic backgrounds for action. The strong presence of the Oresund dimension in the strategic documents points on the one hand, to the politicians' strong awareness of the gains and advantages of the Oresund perspective, and on the other hand, to the need to further integrate this perspective into the every day routine.

While actors like Frederiksberg, Lund or Bornholm have a limited profile, Region Skåne, Region Hovedstaden and Malmö appear as fairly strong and interested actors in the cross-border context. Moreover, cooperation in the Oresund committee is supplemented by bilateral contacts e.g. between Malmö and Copenhagen, Elsinore and Helsingborg or Landskrona and Glostrup. Cooperation in the Oresund Committee is not free of conflicting interests, as Malmö's and Copenhagen's demand for an Oresund metro and the potential HH-link compete for investments in regional infrastructure.

Cooperation in the Oresund region is also strongly influenced by general developments in its context. For example, the decision to build a fixed link across the Fehmarn Belt has turned Region Zealand's focus more to the south, while Lund is more focused on local planning and local development in preparation of the large investments in research facilities. Moreover, territorial re-shaping in form of new local government structures has had a high impact on cross-border cooperation: First, it temporarily re-directed the focus of the member organisations to the internal process of restructuring. Second, member structures within the Oresund Committee have changed in diverging directions. Thus, the answer to the question of who belongs to the institution and why, reflects the territorial preconditions and the general conception of cross-border cooperation: Regional development, being a central aspect of cross-border cooperation, also requires the inclusion of all relevant actors.

While membership on the Swedish side today has a clearer structure with actors from region Skåne and the large cities, the Danish side is characterised by a higher plurality, including local and regional municipalities and intermediary organisations for the local governments. Finally, the tasks and competences of the member organisations had been rather similar until 2007, the new structures on the Danish side increased diversity and thus the need for more policy coordination on the Danish side.

While this chapter has primarily focused on the Oresund Committee's member organisations, their strategies and interests, the next section will concentrate on the contextual perception of the Oresund region.

4.3 Contextual Perception

The contextual perception of cooperation in the Oresund region is particularly important for Oresund cooperation, as these provide alternative channels through which regional actors can push for regional topics and interests. Thus, contextual perception is not seen as passive temporisation but as a goal-oriented action that aims to create a specific image of the region and to work for a strong position of the region in order to forward the regional interests.

With regard to the Oresund region, several aspects that refer to its contextual perception come into focus: (1) the European level through the INTERREG programme, which is strongly related with the European Spatial Development Policy (ESDP) and the recognition as an EURES partnership in 1997, (2) the Nordic Council of Ministers, (3) regional publication activities, (4) a high degree of visibility both in the community of cross-border regions and (5) on the nation state level.

(1) The Oresund region has a strong presence on the European level. One central aspect that enhanced the Oresund regions' contextual perception was its full integration into the INTERREG programme with Sweden's EU accession in 1995. Since then, remarkable funds for cross-border projects were made available through the regional INTERREG programme *Öresund*. Intensive lobbying by the national governments brought not only the Oresund region, but in particular the newly-established regional body to cooperation, the Oresund Committee, into a central position with regard to administration and the distribution of the funds provided (Rahbek Rosenholm, 1997: 74). Along with the task to formulate the framework for the regional INTERREG programme, there are relatively close relations between the Oresund Committee and the steering committee for the INTERREG programme. Politicians and civil servants who already are members of the Oresund Committee and the Oresund commission dominate this group and its advising committee, thus, the overlap of persons is often remarkable (Hall/Sjövik/Stubbergaard, 2005: 122).

Even with the start of the programme period 2007-2013, when new programme geography was established in the western part of the Baltic Sea Region, the Oresund

region could safeguard its visibility in form of the sub-programme Öresund under the umbrella of the *INTERREG IV A Kattegat-Skagerrak-Öresund*.¹²⁶

Moreover, the Oresund Region was included into the European Commission's *ESDP* "as a core element in a possible 'global economic integration zone', proposed as a counterpart to the traditional European growth pole of 'the blue banana'" (Jensen/Richardson, 2004: 142). That way, the Oresund region has been present at the European level in different, but inter-linked contexts for more than 20 years.¹²⁷

Finally, the Oresund region was given the status of an EURES partnership in 1997.¹²⁸ Specific EURES cross-border partnerships are concerned with the needs of cross-border commuters in areas with a particularly high number of cross-border commuters. They try to bring all the relevant actors together and to provide the information needed in order to implement a common European labour market.

(2) Since its early beginnings, the Oresund region has been embedded in a Nordic context. While the Nordic perspective from an external point of view is not as visible as the European perspective, it stands for the continuous work on the reduction of cross-border hindrances in a Nordic context. After the foundation of the NCM in 1971, the Oresund Region became one of the Nordic border regions¹²⁹ in the so-called *Gränshinderforum* (border hindrance forum), and received funding in order to strengthen the region's development and for the continuous work on the reduction of concrete cross-border hindrances, like border commuters' problems, security standards or transit rules (Erlingsson, 2001: 27).¹³⁰ However, at less than one percent

¹²⁶ For more information on single projects, please consult the project data base of the Interreg IV A Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak (<http://www.interreg-oks.eu/se/Menu/Projektbank>; 5. June 2013, 10:00).

¹²⁷ Interregional and cross-border cooperation are important tools for the implementation of the *ESDP* (European Commission, 1999: 42-44).

¹²⁸ The acronym EURES stands for EUROpean Employment Services and is a general information service for labour mobility across the EU (<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=56&acro=eures&lang=en>; 6. August 2013, 11:32).

¹²⁹ These 12 regions are: ARKO-samarbetet, Kvarkenrådet, Mittnordenkomitén, Nordkalotträdet, Gränskomittén Østfold – Bohuslän/Dalsland, Öresundskomittén, Tornedalsrådet, Bottenviksbågen, Hedmark-Dalarna, MittSkandia, Gränskomittén Värmland-Østfold, Nordiska Atlantssamarbetet (<http://www.norden.org/sv/nordiska-ministerraadet/ministerraad/nordiska-ministerraadet-foer-naeringsliv-energi-och-regionalpolitik-mr-ner/institutioner-samarbetsorgan-graensregioner-och-arbetsgrupper/graensregioner>; 24. June 2013, 11:56).

¹³⁰ <http://www.norden.org/sv/nordiska-ministerraadet/samarbetsministrarna-mr-sam/graenshindersarbete/graenshinderforum> (24. June 2013, 11:48).

of the Oresund Committee's overall budget of about 12 million DKK in 2009 (1.6m Euros), funding by the NCM is relatively low (Öresundskomiteen, 2009: 35).

In addition, the NCM provides specific project funding for single projects, like the GOLIN (*Gränsregionala Optimala Lösningar i Norden*)¹³¹ or the project *Informationsstjänst Öresund Direkt Malmö 2011-2013*¹³² and keeps the border hindrance issue on the agenda, both within the respective regions and on the nation states' level.

(3) Within the Oresund region, there has been a great deal of publishing activity, both with regard to classical public relations and analysis. Classical publication activities cover, for example, the Oresund Committee's newsletter *Øresundsbrev*, its annual report *Årsmagasin* and supplements to selected newspapers.

Others of a more analytical character are the report *33 hindringer, udfordringer og opportunities: Øresundsmodellen 2010*¹³³, or *TendensØresund 2012*, a small booklet that provides interesting statistics on the region. Again, others formulate common positions and plans like *Öresundskomiteens fælles trafikoplæg til regeringerne I Sverige og Danmark (2009)*¹³⁴, or *En Kulturvision for Øresundsregionen – en rejse ud i fremtiden mellem Sverige og Danmark (2008)*¹³⁵.

Most scientific and non-scientific literature on the Oresund region was published around the year 2000 – predominately between 1997 and 2005. During that period, in 2002, the Oresund Institute (*Øresundinstituttet, ØI*) was founded as a Danish-Swedish non-profit organisation, with the strategic goal of enhancing regional integration across the Oresund through the provision of “qualified analysis, objective fact finding and boundary-crossing debate regarding different political economy policy issues.” It is supposed to give inspiration to the process of “integration and the international positioning of the Oresund region.” The institute binds together the region's fourteen

¹³¹ http://www.granskommitten.com/media/83346/golin_slutrapport_svensk.pdf (24. June 2013, 12:24).

¹³² Information Service Öresund Direkt Malmö 2011-2013.

¹³³ *33 hindrances, challenges and opportunities: The Oresund model 2010* (http://www.oresundskomiteen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/33_DK.pdf; 1. July 2013, 11:18).

¹³⁴ The Oresund Committee's common working paper on traffic to the governments in Denmark and Sweden (<http://www.oresundskomiteen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Trafikopl%C3%A6g-til-regeringerne-DK.pdf>; 1. July 2013, 11:34).

¹³⁵ *A cultural vision for the Oresund region – a journey to the future between Sweden and Denmark*.

universities to public life, where information, analysis and ideas are created and spread in order to support the integration process and the development of the region. Since its foundation, the ØI has published many books and reports, for example on cross-border cooperation of local governments (2004), the Danish and the Swedish labour market (2006), Tourism (2008), or most recently the book *Øresundsregionen – Københavns outnyttjade möjligheter* (2013)¹³⁶. Moreover, it publishes *Job ø Magt (Job & Power)*, a Swedish-Danish quarterly with a special focus on Oresund issues.¹³⁷

In addition, in 2012, a new INTERREG IV A project started under the name *Øresund Media Platform*, conducted by Øresundsinsituttet, University of Lund and Roskilde University, supported by many other regional actors. It is the umbrella for two activities *News Øresund* and *Media Research Øresund*. The former aims to establish the *Øresund Magazine*, an annual magazine in English, mainly outwardly oriented towards business travellers, diplomats, researchers, journalists and people with a special interest in the region¹³⁸ and a regional news office. *Media Research Øresund* investigates on how the media report on the Oresund region.¹³⁹

(4) Apart from that, the Oresund region today is a well-known case in the community of cross-border regions both within the Baltic Sea Region but also across Europe. Since 1993, the Oresund Committee has been a member of the *European Association of Border Regions (AEBR)* and has repeatedly been involved in its chairmanship. The Oresund Committee participated also in the Baltic Euroregional network (BEN), an INTERREG IIIB project that aimed to “promote spatial development and territorial integration in the Baltic Sea Region by strengthening Euroregions as competent partners with national authorities and international institutions, and by building a network of Euroregions for continuous capacity-building and sharing of experience” (BEN, 2007: 9). In addition, a number of delegations from other regions have been visiting the Oresund region during the last decades in order to learn from this example.

Contextual visibility is also reflected in two prizes that the Oresund Committee has won during the last years. Together with the city of Malmö, in 2011, it won the *Intermodes Award* for the progress made in establishing a user-oriented cross-border public transport infrastructure. The official justification says:

¹³⁶ Oresund region – Copenhagen’s unused opportunities.

¹³⁷ <http://www.oresundsinsituttet.org/en/> (1. July, 11:55).

¹³⁸ <http://oresundmagazine.org/> (1. July 2013, 12:26).

¹³⁹ <http://oresundmediaplatform.org> (1. July 2013, 14:15).

“(…) In terms of cross-border mobility, the Öresund Region in Denmark and Sweden figures as an example of good practice in this sensitive area. Many transport infrastructures have been built, in particular the rail and road Öresund Bridge. An intermodal ticketing system integrates the Danish and Swedish trains serving the areas of Copenhagen and Skane. Tickets are not only valid as tickets on the trains, but also on buses in the two regions and even on ferries between Denmark and Sweden. This scheme has been enriched by the Malmö Citytunnel and three new stations, which altogether constitute a shortcut from Sweden to Europe through Denmark” (Intermodes 2011).

Furthermore, it got the AEBR's *Sail of Papenburg Award 2011*¹⁴⁰ for the report *33 Hindrances, Challenges and Opportunities – The Öresund Model 2010* that focuses on the state of the art with regard to labour market integration. It presents a systematic approach for the identification of border hindrances, identifies affected people, gives some perspectives on how the issue could be resolved and identifies the actors that are capable of resolving the problem.

(5) Finally, but most importantly, the nation-state level is the most important reference point for cross-border cooperation, as most important issues of cross-border relevance are decided in and negotiated between the two national parliaments or governments. Therefore, strong efforts are to be undertaken to enhance the region's contextual perception e.g. through reports, publications, meetings, conferences etc. Moreover, the Oresund perspective is included in important strategic documents on the nation state level like *The new map of Denmark – spatial planning under new conditions*,¹⁴¹ and the Swedish *Intermodal national plan 2010-2021*¹⁴².

This selection of examples reflects both the variety and the relatively high the degree of contextual perception of the Oresund region.¹⁴³ However, all these examples focus on the regional political system; material on the region's perception in society is hard to find. In practice, this includes daily interaction with, for example, Danish neighbours, Swedish colleges or the occasional article in newspapers, primarily about problematic issues like cross-border taxation or rail transport across the bridge. Thus, the Oresund

¹⁴⁰ http://www.aebr.eu/en/pdf/winner_1_2011_en.pdf (24. June 2013, 11:30).

¹⁴¹ <http://www.sns.dk/udgivelser/2006/87-7279-728-2/pdf/87-7279-728-2.pdf> (24. August 2013, 12:41).

¹⁴² <http://www.government.se/sb/d/12880/a/143243> (24. August 2013, 12:40).

¹⁴³ The Oresund region appears also as a reference point for other city regions, e.g. in a study of Stockholms Regional planning and traffic office (Stockholms läns landsting, 2001: *Storstadskonkurrens och samarbete i norra Europa*) and as a benchmark for Helsinki in the OECD study 2003 (OECD, 2003: 14).

perspective has become a part of the regional political system and has gained a fairly strong position in local and regional society.

4.4 Symbolic Shaping

Against the background of general tendencies like globalisation, deregulation, liberalisation, regionalisation and the prevailing view “that regions must compete against each other both as localisations of public and private investments” (Tangkjær/Linde Lauresen, 2004: 12), regional actors in the Oresund region fairly early regarded it as important to arouse “collective excitement, [...] to create the enthusiasm necessary to convince actors inside as well as outside the region that the region is resourceful, desirable, legitimate, and credible” (Berg, 2000: 75).

This position has been important for the regional process across the Oresund until today, as the subsequent quote from a booklet published by the city of Malmö on the occasion of the 10 years anniversary of the inauguration of the Oresund bridge:

„Danska och Svenska statens investering i Öresundsbron skapade framtidstro och en förväntan. Detta tillsammans med etableringen av Malmö Högskola, utbyggnaden av Västra Hamnen och Bostadsmässan B001, den internationellt kända profilbyggnaden Turning Torso, byggandet av Citytunneln i kombination [!] med ”Storytelling” om Malmö och Öresundsregionen har bidragit till att investerings- och etableringsviljan är hög och det byggs som aldrig förr [!] (Lindström, 2010: 122).”¹⁴⁴

Thus, Charlotte Lindström puts the phenomenon of story-telling into context with the realisation of specific regional projects, and brings the symbolic part of the regional discourse and the implementation of concrete projects together.

This continuous idea of creating enthusiasm and story-telling was actively launched in the early period of Oresund region-building in the 1990s, in a process of “place branding” that was started in form of an INTERREG II project, that brought about the brochure ‘The Birth of a Region’, a logotype (figure 6) that “represents the meeting of

¹⁴⁴ *The Danish and Swedish state investments in the Oresund bridge created optimism and expectations. This, together with the foundation of Malmö Högskola, the extension of the Western Port, the Housing Fair B001, the internationally known profile building Turning Torso, the construction of the city tunnel combined [!] with the ‘storytelling’ about Malmö and the Oresund region have contributed to high willingness for investments and establishment, and construction activities never seen before[!].*

two organic forms, symbolizing people or landscapes” (Buhl Pedersen, 2004: 87) and the slogan for the Oresund Region: *The Human Capital (of Europe)* (Berg, 2001: 186).¹⁴⁵

Figure 7: The Logotype of the Oresund Region



(www.oresundsregionen.org/dk; 13.July 2013, 13:44)

This slogan was to transmit the idea of humanism and quality of life combined with the Scandinavian way of life. Thus, adding a symbolic or identificatory dimension became “an important and intentional part of the [comprehensive (M.S.)] strategic change process” (Berg, 2001: 188) and *Øresund* turned into “a political concept with a claim to generality and many meanings [...] that made] it highly mobile and translatable across interests and political groups” (Tangkjær/Linde Lauresen, 2004: 20).¹⁴⁶

Externally the general intention was “to brand the region as a tourist destination, a continued attractive location for multi-national firms, and ultimately, as a distinct region that will be able to move up in the rankings of dynamic European metropolitan areas” (Bucken-Knapp, 2003: 58). Moreover, it was regarded important to raise the willingness on the national and EU level, to increase investments in the region through a distinct, competitive and politically legitimate concept for regional cooperation (Berg, 2001: 184).

The inward-oriented dimension of this symbolic shaping was to develop “a consciousness among Øresund inhabitants that they not only occupy a common bounded space, but that they have some degree of commonly shared values and

¹⁴⁵ Literature is not definite with regard to the slogan’s geographical supplement. Some only refer to the Human capital, while some say that in its original form, Europe was the frame of reference.

¹⁴⁶ Both Søren Buhl Pedersen (2004) and Christian Tangkjær/Anders Linde-Lauresen (2004) regard place branding in the Oresund region as failed. While Buhl Pedersen reduces its failure to the lack of democratic participation, Tangkjær and Linde-Lauresen see a loss of momentum in the branding process as being mainly due to the actor’s return to every-day business and their genuine structural backgrounds, where the new cross-border layer “simply makes things more complex and communicatively inappropriate” (2004: 25).

interests deriving from inhabiting the Øresund” (Bucken-Knapp, 2003: 58). The idea was to take “the organizational, geographical and infrastructural givens as a starting point [(...) while creating (M.S.)] a new picture by changing the perception and ideas people already hold about it” (Buhl Pedersen, 2004: 79/80).

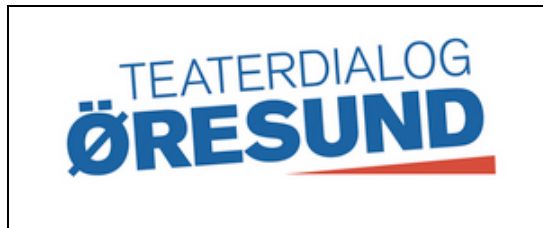
In 2009, a new and updated brochure with the title *Öresundsregionen – the human capital of Scandinavia* was published on behalf of the Oresund Committee. The change in the geographical reference is a pronounced indicator for the altered perception of the region, relocating the Oresund region not primarily in Europe, but in its northern part. This also shows that the high-flying goals of the early 1990s had, at least geographically, to be adapted to a more realistic assessment in 2009, but that the main message behind the slogan ‘to create a region based on humanity and quality of life’ is still a key value transported in the regional strategies.

A more recent and rather eye-catching feature is the increasing use of the combined Danish ‘ø’ and Swedish ‘ö’ in publications, the name for INTERREG projects but also in order to arouse interest towards the region (Figure 7). Obviously, an increasing number of people regard this symbol rather appropriate for cross-border activities.

Figure 8: The Combined Ö/Ø in Regional Project Names and Other Outwardly-Oriented Communication



1)



2)



3)



4)



5)

- 1) Logotype for Öresundshuset at Almedalsveckan¹⁴⁷
- 2) INTERREG Project (<http://www.ibu-oresund.se/>; 5. November 2013, 13:00).
- 3) INTERREG Project (<http://www.interreg-oks.eu/se/Material/Files/%C3%96resund/Projekter/%C3%98referie+dyr>; 5. November 2013, 13:08).
- 4) INTERREG Project (<http://www.teaterdialog.eu/>; 5. November 2013, 13:12).
- 5) Cover of the publication Ø/ÖRUS. ØRUS is a cross-border regional development strategy formulated by the Oresund Committee

¹⁴⁷ Particularly at Almedalsveckan, the use of the logotype is fairly frequent. It is both used on the website, flags and T-Shirts (<http://www.oresundshuset.nu/>; 24. July 2012, 13:16)

Moreover, symbolic shaping of the Oresund region has been characterised by “[t]he repetitive and rather monotonous recitation of certain ‘Facts’ [that (M.S.)] has, over the years become part of the region’s identity” (Berg, 2001: 185). The basic argumentative set pieces appear in many publications or presentations about the region, for example:

“Øresundsregionens danske og svenske del har tilsammen 3,7 millioner indbyggere. Hvilket betyder, at regionen kan male sig med andre regioner i Norden og Nordeuropa. Hver for sig er Sjælland og Skåne for små til at tage konkurrencen op med regioner i Europa, Asien og Nordamerika. Den kritiske masse og det marked, som den forenede Øresundsregion har, giver langt bedre forudsætninger for erhvervslivet, arbejdsmarkedet, boligmarkedet, forskning og uddannelse, handel, kultur og recreation” (Øresundskomiteen, 2010: 10).¹⁴⁸

”Tillsammans [!] har vi 3,7 miljoner invånare, 12 universitet, 165000 studenter och 12000 forskare. Tillsammans [!] har vi den största koncentrationen av välutbildade människor i norra delen av Europa. Det vi ser i vår omvärld är att de storstadsregioner som har en stor kritisk massa [!] av människor, är de regioner som är mest framgångsrika [!]” (Lindström, 2010: 123).¹⁴⁹

Similarly, the Oresund Committee’s annual report 2009 and its overview of the past, present and future of Oresund cooperation, perpetuates these basic facts: (1) The Oresund region is the largest and most densely populated urban area in Northern Europe, comprising 25 per cent of the total population in Denmark and Sweden. (2) The region has the highest concentration of well-educated workers in Northern Europe. (3) The region has a strong profile in research and education. (4) The region represents 26 per cent of the total BNP of Denmark and Sweden. (5) The Oresund region is an important hub for transportation, particularly by air (Øresundskomiteen, 2009: 3-4).

Richard Ek points to the crucial fact that this common analysis is the result of simple arithmetics, which counts Skåne’s and Sealand’s population together and thus the Oresund region reaches a critical mass that puts it into a different reference group within the competitive European urban landscape. To fuse in economy, research and

¹⁴⁸ *The Oresund region’s Danish and Swedish parts have 3.7 million inhabitants all together. This means that the region can measure up to other regions in the North and northern Europe. Separately, Sealand and Scania are too small to participate in the competition of regions in Europe, Asia and northern America. The critical mass and the market of a united Oresund region provide much better preconditions for economy, labour and the housing market, research and education, trade, culture and recreation.*

¹⁴⁹ *Taken together [!] we have 3.7 million inhabitants, 12 universities, 165,000 students and 12,000 researchers. Together [!] we have the highest concentration of well-educated people in northern Europe. What we can see in our environment is that those regions, which have a large critical mass of people [!] are the most successful regions [!].*

development, higher education and institutional resources is supposed to further enhance the Oresund region's competitiveness, and to turn the idea of becoming a regional powerhouse (*kraftcentrum*) and gaining international profile into reality (Ek, 2003: 116).

Furthermore, Ek's reduction of the prevailing basic argumentation of today's region-building to a fairly simple but widely uncontroversial causal chain reflects Stein's diagnosis of the primacy of regional economic development: "Better infrastructure -> higher mobility/interaction -> regional integration -> economic growth".¹⁵⁰ An improved infrastructure lays the basis for more mobility and a higher degree of interaction, thus, regional integration that, again, will be a breeding ground for more economic growth. Success is continuously evaluated through international rankings, the publication of cross-border statistics and reports like the OECD study on the Oresund region published in 2004 perpetuate this focus on economic indicators.

These dynamic aspects of the 'powerhouse' are also reflected in the key metaphors that Orvar Löfgren identified in the process of "the making of the Øresund region: speed and mobility" (Löfgren, 2000: 27) as well as the aspects of "flow" (Löfgren, 2000: 46) and "bridging" (Löfgren, 2000: 36). Thus, a general understanding of what a modern Øresund region should be like was constructed.¹⁵¹

Compared to the early ideas of the Ørestad in the 1950s and 1960s, which have their roots in the expected ever-increasing urbanisation, symbolic shaping of the Oresund region today is built on the economic crisis in the 1970s and 1980s, and its impacts on the overall functional urban area. Although the city remains in a central position for the definition of the region, economy has turned into the linchpin of the regional project (Stein, 2000: 133). Notwithstanding that the emphasis on and the definition of the single aspects have been shifting and that the core ideas behind the Ørestad and the Oresund region vary strongly, the measures chosen to implement both concepts appear rather similar: to establish a progressive and sophisticated modern transport

¹⁵⁰ "BÄTTRE INFRASTRUKTUR -> HÖGRE MOBILITET/INTERAKTION -> REGIONAL INTEGRATION -> EKONOMISKT TILLVÄXT" (EK, 2003: 157).

¹⁵¹ In the article *Regionauts: the Transformation of Cross-Border Regions in Scandinavia (2008)*, Orvar Löfgren provides comparative insight on how citizens make use of the opportunities provided in cross-border regions in northern Europe. With regard to the Oresund region he points to the cultural clashes, fears, but also creative ways of using the cross-border location for one's own benefit: "The Danish tax authorities, for example, located a few dozen young Danish men registered in the same two-room flat in Malmö, where they had just bought new cars without paying Danish taxes" (203).

infrastructure, a modern economy as well as the importance of good education and living conditions, and culture.

Still, the most important contribution for symbolic shaping was and is the physical building of the Oresund bridge, a symbol for and manifestation of the, until then, rather virtual initiatives for regional cooperation. Moreover, it honours the most basic promise made by the region-builders: a serious improvement of cross-border mobility. Thus, the Oresund bridge generally mediates that a common cross-border region is feasible and gives inspiration for the further region-building process. This also explains the disappointment and the general critique that was raised as the de facto passenger numbers crossing the bridge did not live up to the expectations in the early years after its opening.

During the last years, new aims and goals were added to cross-border cooperation. These particularly regard the aspect of green growth and climate issues that entered the regional discourse in preparation for the World Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. Since then, the catch-words 'klimatsmart' or 'grøn vækst' have become increasingly used in the cross-border border context, too.

In summary, this chapter on symbolic shaping has shown that the Oresund region-building is characterised by many activities that help to establish a common symbolic basis for cross-border cooperation. Until today, symbols and slogans have been developed that lay down the core ideas of regional cooperation. While some adaptations have been made with regard to the geographical reference or the inclusion of green issues, the main idea of cooperation, to become an economically, politically and socially successful cross-border region, remained unchanged. Regarding the development of a regional we-feeling the answer is split. While the Oresund dimension is rather obvious in strategic documents and the rhetoric of regional actors, media coverage is still relatively low. Thus, the regional we-feeling is comparably strong among regional actors and comparably low in the general public.

4.5 Institutionalisation of the Oresund region

This chapter on region-building in the Oresund region gave a comprehensive overview of the four aspects of territorial, symbolic and institutional shaping, and the contextual perception of the Oresund region. It has shown that since the early beginnings, cross-border cooperation across the Oresund has been both characterised by change and continuity.

Changes with regard to territorial shaping primarily go back to the reforms in local government structures. While the Swedish part of the Oresund region was in focus during the early years, the permanent establishment of Region Skåne in 2010 brought stability to the Swedish local government system. During the period when the former Danish regional level and Region Skåne existed simultaneously, competences and tasks of the regional level were rather similar. The Danish 2007 local government reform meant major changes to the Danish regional level and increased asymmetry regarding the Oresund Committee's member organisations' competences. These new constellations in the Danish political system had a re-arrangement of the representation of the Danish side in the Oresund Committee as a consequence.

Particularly, the inclusion of representatives from the municipal liaison councils (KKR), which have no equivalent on the Swedish side, is a manifestation of these changes. Moreover, some members are now represented in multiple ways, like the municipalities of Copenhagen and Frederiksberg, which have own representatives within the Oresund Committee but which, actually, are also represented through the KKR. Thus, changes in the territorial background unfolded an impact on the institutional shaping in form of the inclusion of new members into the political cross-border body. But also informal adaptation of local government has an impact. For example, in the context of lacking knowledge and capacity of the local level with regard to regional planning. It remains to be seen how regional planning practices develop during the course of time, and if the regional level can affirm its position that is mainly based on knowledge and capacity rather than formal competences.

Depending on their political, strategic and economic capacity, membership in the Oresund Committee has a rather diverging meaning to the single member organisation. This ranges from municipalities with a very strong focus on the Oresund perspective,

like Region Skåne and Region Hovedstaden to municipalities with a rather low profile, like Frederiksberg or Bornholm. Malmö and Copenhagen are together, with Region Skåne and Region Hovedstaden being the gravitation centre of the Oresund Committee. Both regions share a specific strategic position within their nation state. While Copenhagen and the Danish Capital area see themselves challenged by the strong interests of Jutland, Malmoe and Region Skåne see themselves in domestic competition with Stockholm and Gothenburg. In both cases, the Oresund region offers the opportunity to strengthen the regional profile not least through the use of European channels.

The example of the city of Copenhagen shows that personalities matter. Having a rather low priority under the Lord Mayor Ritt Bjerregaard, her successor Frank Jensen put it back into a more central position. However, the changes in the territorial background on the Danish side and primarily the fact that Copenhagen has lost its status as a regional municipality will also have a considerable impact on the profile that the city of Copenhagen can develop in cross-border cooperation, yet, in face of the prevailing primacy of economic regional development, its role will on an informal level remain stronger than other smaller local municipalities. Moreover, many regional actors point to the strategic importance of the city of Copenhagen for the progress of regional cooperation.

Changes in the territorial context created pressure for institutional adaptation of the Oresund Committee in 2007. However, without the often-repeated claim to turn the Oresund Committee from a primarily administrative into a political institution, such a profound change in the institutional structure would hardly have been possible. The improvement of the political profile was mainly achieved through the formal combination of high-ranking political posts in the home institutions, with important posts within the institutional architecture of the Oresund Committee. This, taken together with the strategic re-orientation towards a lobby organisation, helped to make cooperation more political.

While having been involved in project work to a large extent in the beginning, the Oresund Committee today primarily serves the more general purpose, to represent the

region's interest outwards and to define common priorities like ØRUS¹⁵², the common regional development strategy of the Oresund Committee's member organisations. This strategy was approved in 2010 and focuses on four areas for more cooperation and integration: knowledge and innovation, culture and experiences, coherent and varied labour market, accessibility and mobility. Wide parts of this strategic document have today become part of the member organisation's regional and local development strategies. So that we can state that not only the member organisations influence the Oresund Committee, but that agreements reached in the Oresund Committee vice versa have an impact on the single member organisations. This helps to diffuse the main logic behind regional cooperation among the local and regional entities.

The Oresund Committee's member organisations cover a wide range of different interests, combined with a lack of decision-making competence in the most relevant strategic policy fields for the cross-border region. This turns the Oresund Committee by tendency more into a coordination forum rather than a regional decision-taking body. As the main addressees for its political demands are to be found in its context on other political levels where decisions of regional importance are taken, the main and most significant characteristic of cooperation in the Oresund Committee has been a basic consensus on the importance of cross-border cooperation, its strong reliance on mutual trust and confidence safeguarded by a certain continuity of the persons involved.

However, among the member organisations of the Oresund Committee, there are diverging opinions on its importance, visibility and effectiveness. Some doubt whether the Oresund Committee as a mediator between state and Oresund region exists at all, while others perceive it as an integral part of their strategic cooperation and emphasise close cooperation. Few point to its lack in producing binding decisions, apart from decisions on INTERREG funding. Some emphasise the progress that has been made with regard to changing the Oresund Committee from a project organisation into a political lobby organisation, e.g. through its participation in the *Almedalsveckan* in Visby or *Folkemødet* on Bornholm island. However, all agree in their understanding of the Oresund Committee primarily as a political platform for discussion, many add its

¹⁵² The acronym ØRUS stands for Øresundsregional Udviklingsstrategi (development strategy for the Oresund Region). For more information see: <http://www.oresundskomiteen.org/%C3%B8rus/>; 4. September 2013, 10:47).

quality as a lobby organisation. Some demand a better inclusion of the local municipalities.

Obviously, the structural changes in 2007 succeeded in making the forum more political. Regional actors emphasise that politicians have been increasingly included. Particularly with regard to border hindrances has the Oresund Committee been active, and, for example, initiated a common meeting between the Danish and Swedish parliamentary committees on communications and infrastructure. Thus, the Oresund Committee is perceived as more professional and as a regional institution that has knowledge and competence on the cross-border region.

Great efforts have been made to increase the contextual perception of the Oresund region from its relaunch in the 1990s onwards. The Oresund region has been receiving funding from both the EU's and the Nordic Council's regional policies. Having an INTERREG sub-programme under the label Oresund enhances its visibility on the European level remarkably. Moreover, it has been granted several distinctions since its re-launch in the 1990s. Visibility on the nation-state level is of central importance for the Oresund region in order to come to results, the fact that the Oresund region today has made its way into central national planning strategies shows that the contextual perception generally is rather high, though potentially not as high as originally hoped for. External criticism has been raised regarding the existing Oresund bureaucracy and the fact that there are people that subsist on the Oresund region's existence. These 'system-preserving bureaucrats' are perceived as uninspired and reluctant with regard to further integration or innovations.

One important aspect of the activities to enhance the contextual perception has been to give cross-border cooperation a symbolic dimension. Symbols and slogans were developed at a fairly early stage of region-building, but much more than these densifications of the idea behind the regional project, the recurrent repetition of specific regional facts has helped to create a regional we-feeling. However, this we-feeling seems strongest among directly involved regional actors and not so widespread in the regional population. The most symbolic and simultaneously tangible materialisation of the cross-border region still remains the Oresund bridge.

Apart from the formalised structure of the Oresund Committee, regional actors emphasise that the regional network is larger than the Oresund Committee and point to the great deal of bilateral cooperation between public servants and politicians,

between single units and departments. In many contexts, the same persons have been involved over years, which is perceived as very fruitful. That way, focussing on the Oresund Committee and its member organisations describes only one part, namely political regional cooperation across the Sound, de facto, the regional network includes many other regional actors.

This also points to the question of whether region-building in the Oresund region or the Oresund Committee is an *autocommunicative process* “mainly involving the political-economical elite and Öresund sources themselves” or whether it also reflects the public interest (Falkheimer, 2004: 219; Berg 2001: 187-188). The question of democracy has, though heavily debated among scholars, not lead to ponderable changes in the institutional structures; obviously legitimacy of the Oresund Committee is mainly output-based, for example through overarching intraregional transport planning and implementation providing seamless transportation facilities in the overall region.

Particularly in that respect, the Oresund Region has, despite all initial and recurring difficulties, been rather successful. Public transport is also a good example to highlight the region’s interconnectedness: as much as the bridge has become an every-day tool to get from A to B within the region, difficulties with public transport on one side of the Sound may have an impact on all passengers across the bridge, in particular the life of cross-border commuters, their employers and not least their families. If one tries to imagine a shut down of the bridge over a longer period of time, combined with the re-establishment of the old ferry system, the tremendous and fundamental changes that the fixed link has brought to the region and every day life become tangible.

5. Göteborg-Oslo Regionen (GO-Region)

Cooperation in the GO-Region has its origin in the late 1980s when first informal bilateral relations between the cities of Gothenburg and Oslo were established. These early years were characterised by getting to know each other and establishing personal contacts. These connections laid the basis for the official foundation of the GO-Region in 1995.

An important catalyst factor for the intensification of contacts between both cities during the early 1990s, were the changes on the international horizon. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Sweden, Norway and Finland applied for EU membership in the early 1990s. With the different outcome of the referenda on EC membership in Norway and Sweden, which had Swedish EC accession and Norwegian non-accession as a consequence, new dynamics came into the regional process, not least due to the need to find a way to deal with these changing preconditions.

Moreover, all over Europe, cross-border cooperation experienced a remarkable expansion and the decision to build a fixed link across the Oresund and particularly the prospect that the Oresund region would, from 1995 onwards, fully belong to the EU and be eligible for funding from various European sources made it, from the perspective of actors from Gothenburg and Oslo, necessary to find new ways of how to handle the new circumstances. The evolving dynamic around the Oresund was observed attentively and of course some politicians in Gothenburg and Oslo feared that the evolving dynamics in the Oresund region could potentially put their own region to the margins. From that perspective, increasing activity between Oslo and Gothenburg can be interpreted as a reaction to region-building activities across the Oresund.

In this context, political actors from the cities of Gothenburg and Oslo decided to establish this new forum for cross-border cooperation, which was officially institutionalised under the label *GO-Region* in 1995. The geographical distance between Gothenburg and Oslo is 300 km, travel time ranges from three hours by car and almost four hours by train. The subsequent chapter provides an overview and an analysis of how the GO-Region has evolved and developed, referring to the aspects of institutional structure, membership and strategies (territorial shaping), symbolic shaping and contextual perception, and finally presenting some preliminary conclusions.

5.1 Institutional Structure of the GO-Region

The institutional development of the GO-Region has been characterised by a process of formalisation in two stages: (1) the institutionalisation of cooperation in 1995, and (2) the period since the signing of the new cooperation agreement in 2001.

(1) In the 1995 cooperation agreement, regional actors gave regional cooperation a relatively clear and simple structure. The only body that was established was the *Cooperation Council (samarbeidsråd)*, composed of representatives from the leading political and administrative level of both cities. It included ten members, five thereof from each city, and met at least once a year (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen 1995: §4-5).

Chairmanship of this body alternated every second year between both cities. Secretarial duties were taken over by the administration of the respective chairman. In addition to that, the Cooperation Council had the competence to establish working groups on current issues. In the cooperation agreement infrastructure, economic development, tourism and culture were defined as fields of cooperation. Even if the original cooperation agreement between Oslo and Gothenburg from 2 February 1995 did not include the surrounding and intermediate local and regional municipalities, it was conceptualised as open towards them (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen 1995: §2). They were not least included through the so-called *Affiliated Board*, a political working or lobby group, already established in 1989.

After some years, regional players identified a gap between expectations and reality, which also pointed to deficiencies that made regional cooperation particularly difficult, like lacking common regional identity and the poor transport infrastructure between both cities. Taken together with the identified need to include other regional actors, a general re-orientation process has started and materialised in several steps since 2000.

(2) The most physical outcome of this process was the signing of the new cooperation agreement in 2003, which introduced a more sophisticated organisational structure and significantly widened and diversified membership.

Widening of the organisation's membership took place in three ways. (1) In 2003, three new members were integrated into the cooperation: the Norwegian regional municipalities *Akershus* and *Østfold* and the Swedish region *Västra Götalandsregion*. (2) Moreover, the model of the triple helix was adapted, adding representatives from business and academia. (3) Finally, in 2010, the cross-border organisation

Gränskomitén Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland, which bundles the close border area along the southernmost part of the Swedish Norwegian border, joined the GO-Region. Consequently, the *GO-Region* today covers not only the cities of Oslo and Gothenburg but also a great deal of their catchment area, so that it is more appropriate to talk about a corridor of cooperation that connects both cities across the Norwegian-Swedish border area.

This widening of membership has taken place in face of the insight that the expansion of transport infrastructure was one of the main preconditions for more regional cooperation between Oslo and Gothenburg. Transport infrastructure being a highly contested and sensitive policy area, where many different public, private and economic interests meet, made it sensible not only to include both cities but the affected regional authorities in the corridor between them.

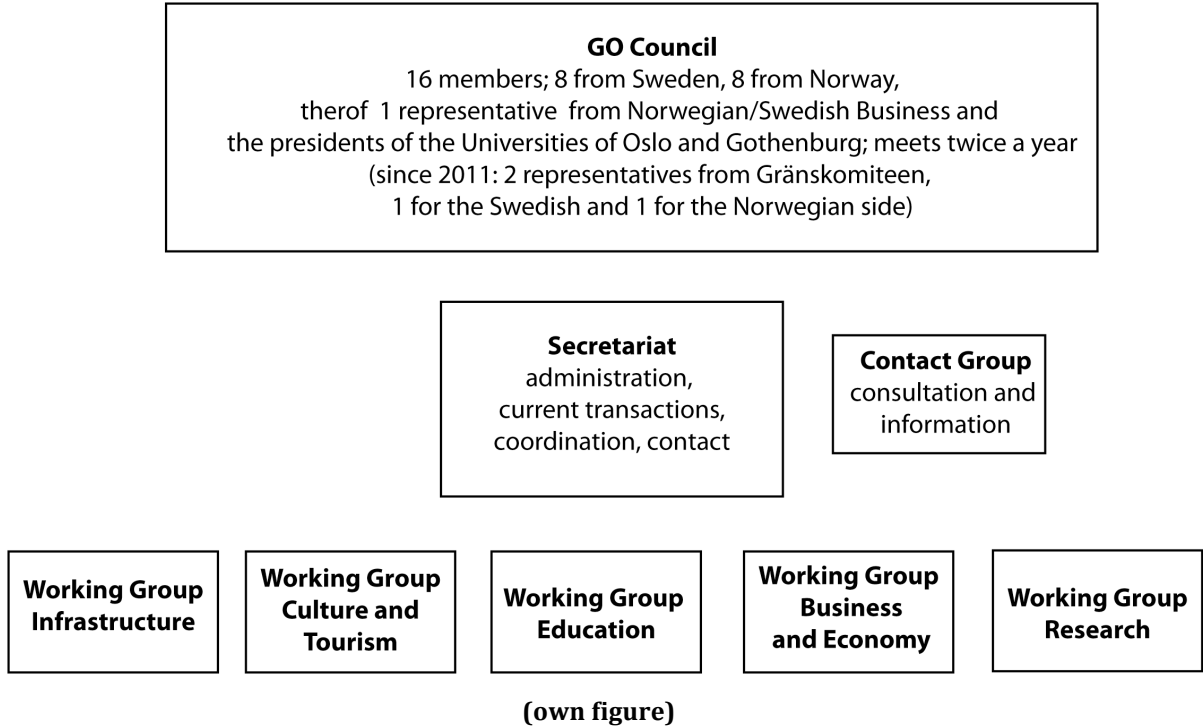


Figure 9: The Institutional Structure of the Göteborg-Oslo Region

While the organisational structure of the cooperation in the beginning only included the *samarbeidsråd*, today it comprises the *GO Council*, the *Contact Group*, the *Secretariat* and five topic-bound working-groups. Figure 8 gives an overview of the *Institutional Structure of the Göteborg-Oslo Region*, consisting of the *GO Council*, *Contact Group*, a

Secretariat and five issue-oriented working groups (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2003: § 5).

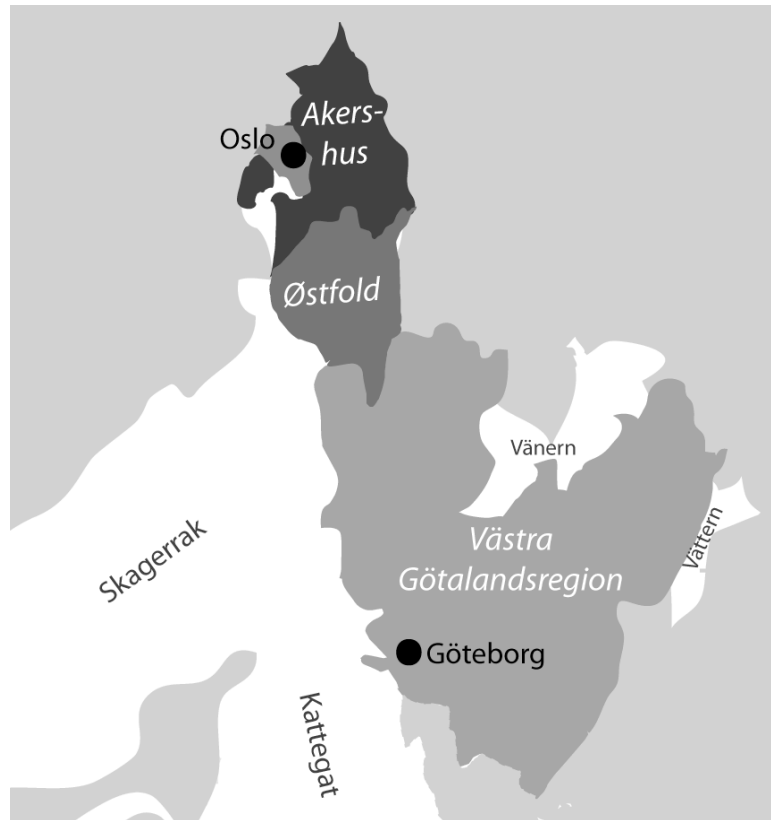
The *GO Council* is the highest decision-taking body of the GO-cooperation. It is responsible for both strategic planning and the implementation of common decisions. The Council works according to the guidelines of cooperation, monitoring and safeguarding the implementation of decisions and deciding upon the budget of the secretariat, marketing and information activities, and the funding for projects and other activities.

Table 6: Member Structure of the GO-Council

Norway		Sweden	
Oslo Kommune	2	Göteborgs Stad	4
Akershus Fylkeskommune	2	Västra Götalandsregion	2
Østfold Fylkeskommune	2		
Grænskomiteen	1	Grænskomiteen	1
University of Oslo	1	University of Gothenburg	1
Representative for economy	1	Representative for economy	1
Total	9	Total	9

Today, the *GO Council* includes 16 members, eight from the Norwegian and eight from the Swedish side. 12 out of the 16 members are local or regional politicians, six from the Swedish and six from the Norwegian part. *Akershus fylkeskommune*, *Østfold fylkeskommune* and *Västra Götalandsregion* nominate two representatives each. Gothenburg points out four politicians and one representative for Swedish economy. Oslo points out two political representatives and one for the Norwegian economy. Grænskomiteén delegates two representatives, one for the Swedish and one for the Norwegian members. Moreover, the university principles of the Universities of Oslo and Gothenburg are included. In that manner, the GO-Region follows a triple helix-structure including representatives from business, politics and science/academia.

Table 6 gives an overview of the member structure of the GO-Council, while figure 10 provides an overview of the geographical area covered by the GO-Region.



(own figure)

Figure 10: The Geographical Area Covered by the GO-Region

The members of the *GO Council* agree among themselves on the Council's leadership, the so-called *Executive Committee*, consisting of a chair and a vice-chair representing either the city of Oslo or the city of Gothenburg. The general term of office for the chairmanship and the representatives is two years; the GO Council meets twice a year. The contact group and the secretariat participate in these meetings, too, while only the members of the council have the right to vote. The formal decision-making rule is simple majority - in the case of equal vote distribution the chairman's vote counts double.

The *contact group* consists of civil servants belonging to the administrations of the member organisations. There is no exact number of members to the contact group fixed in the statutes – each partner appoints the 'right' number of persons according to his own view. Currently, there are five public servants represented in the contact

group.¹⁵³ Its task is to provide the GO-Council with necessary information for decision taking. Moreover, it has a consultative function both for the GO Council, the secretariat and the single working groups.

As a preparatory measure for the upcoming changes, the secretariat was already established in 2002 and localised under the umbrella of the Gothenburg Business Region (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2008: 7). Nowadays, it is in charge of everyday business such as accounting, drawing up a budget, and treasury. It works for the implementation of the decisions taken by the GO Council, and has a reporting, informing and coordinating function between the GO-Council, the contact group and the working groups. Further, the secretariat is responsible for external relations.

GO cooperation has working groups in five defined areas: infrastructure, culture and tourism, education, business and economy, and, most recently, research. Member representation in the working groups follows the principle of equal representation of the Norwegian and the Swedish side. Their activities follow the aims and guiding principles of the GO cooperation. They meet three times a year and are supposed to conduct at least one project per year. They work out a working plan for the next two years and continuously report to the secretariat.

The GO region has a common budget of about 2.1 million SEK (ca. 250,000 Euros) of which each national side contributes half, or to be more precise 1,050,000 SEK. Each of the three Norwegian municipalities contributes 350,000 SEK and the two Swedish partners 525,000 SEK each (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2012: 8).

The general aim of the GO Region has been to increase the overall international attractiveness as a region for investments and settlement, and to stimulate the economic development of the region (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 1995: § 2). A positive economic, cultural and social development of the region has been regarded essential to gain profile both nationally and internationally (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2003: § 2). Main areas of cooperation, which are supposed to support these aims include infrastructure, economic development, tourism and culture, research and development, and education/training (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2003: § 3; 2008: 7).

¹⁵³ <http://www.go-regionen.org/sidorutanformenyn/kontaktaoss/kontaktgruppen.4.26d15e9911ad89104158000150871.html> (26. November 2012, 11:16).

5.2 Members of the GO-Region, their Domestic Background and their Strategies

Looking at the formal member structure of the GO-Region, there are five actors to focus upon: *Oslo Kommune*, *Akershus* and *Østfold fylkeskommune*, *Göteborgs Stad*, *Västra Götalands Region*. In addition, the presidents of the Universities of Oslo and Gothenburg as well as two representatives for economy, and since 2011, the cross-border organisation *Gränskommittéen* are included, without having an official member status according to the statutes.

While formal membership only comprises political actors, de facto membership of the GO-Region follows the principle of the triple helix concept including public agents, academia and economy. Representation is equally balanced along the national lines. Furthermore, two other organisations are involved, the Business Region Göteborg (BRG) and Oslo Teknopol.

Before I elaborate more on the BRG and Oslo Teknopol, I will explore the background and interests of the political units represented in the GO-Region. This analysis will include an overview of relevant aspects of the respective national administrative systems in order to calibrate the actors' space for action (5.2.1) and provide insight regarding the international strategies of the single authorities involved.

5.2.1 Local Government in Norway and Sweden

Swedish and Norwegian local and regional municipalities primarily compose membership in the GO-region. Their background in different national political systems may constitute different tasks and duties and accordingly, different interests, strategic backgrounds and scopes of action. In order to explore the actors' background, the next section provides some basic facts about local and regional authorities in both countries and identifies to what extent they support or challenge cross-border cooperation.

Both in Norway and Sweden, public administration is based on three tiers: the local, the regional and the national level. There is no hierarchical relation between county and local authorities either in Norway or Sweden, which means that they are independent from each other and equal with regard to their relations towards the central state government (Fitschen, 2004: 16). The general division of labour between central state and local level is quite similar in both countries. While the local level is in charge of service provision, the central state takes care of super-ordinate questions like domestic

and foreign security. As the main service provider, municipal self-government traditionally has a very strong position in both countries.

Besides the central state, in Norway there are 19 counties and 430 municipalities, and in Sweden 21 regional and 289 local municipalities (Glißmann, 2004: 78). However, local, and particularly regional government structures have been significantly reformed in both countries during the last 20 years.¹⁵⁴

The most drastic change in Norway was the introduction of functionally defined administrative units above the county level. The introduction of these sector-based regions was inspired by the idea of New Public Management that aims to foster principles of economic and administrative efficiency like sound practices, uniform approach and co-location rather than to place them directly under an elected political government (Grindheim, 2004: 55/Christensen, 2006).¹⁵⁵

The most prominent examples in this respect were the reorganisation of the *Norwegian Public Roads Administration* (Statens vegvesen), which used to be based on county level, to five functional regions, and particularly the transfer of health care services to five regionally organised public enterprises in 2002 (Blom-Hansen et.al., 2012: 76; Blomqvist/Bergmann, 2010: 47; Sandberg, 2005: 108).

The provision of health care services having been one of the main tasks of the regional level, particularly the introduction of these new health regions, meant a significant downgrading of the importance of the political regional level:

“Overnight, they [regions (M.S.)] went from being the most important service providers in the health sector to being left with secondary education and a rather undefined role as partners in regional development” (Grindheim, 2004: 61).

¹⁵⁴ As chapter 4.2.1 provides a more detailed analysis of the developments of Sweden’s local government system, this chapter refers only to specific relevant aspects.

¹⁵⁵ Interestingly, Grindheim further estimated that some of the loss of power might be “regained from a stronger international role of the counties in transregional programmes such as INTERREG, etc.” In fact, the cases analysed support this thesis for more international activities and a qualitative change towards a more strategic approach towards international cooperation. Grindheim describes the situation as follows: “Norwegian counties have developed an international perspective for increased trans-national co-operation and not for the strengthening of their power and authority within the Norwegian state hierarchy” (Grindheim, 2004: 58). This is a remarkable valuation as it points to specific spill-over effects of the EU on non EU member states. Furthermore, it means that local and regional authorities of the non EU-member Norway choose similar strategies in circumventing the national level like other EU-ropean local and regional entities.

In the following period, the counties focused on secondary education and regional development (Blom-Hansen et.al., 2012: 79). Until 2010, the responsibilities of local and regional municipalities in Norway were divided as follows: The county authorities were in charge of upper secondary school and regional development including county roads and public transport, regional planning, business development and culture (museums, libraries, sports). In contrast to that, local municipalities took care of primary and lower secondary education, nurseries, kindergartens, medical care, care for the elderly and disabled, social services, local planning (land use), agricultural issues, environmental issues, local roads, harbours, water supply and sewerage, sanitation, culture, and business development (Det Kongelige Kommunal- og Regionaldepartement, 2008: 9).

However, this transfer of tasks from the democratically elected regional level to a purely administrative authority had wide discussions on the future of the regional level as a consequence. After the general elections in 2005, the political parties agreed to reform the political regional level in Norway once again. At that time, three models for the future organisation of regional administration were discussed.¹⁵⁶ However, the main idea as regards content was rather non-controversial. To these belong: strengthening the democratically elected level through the decentralisation of power, clearly defined responsibilities between the administrative levels, more coordinated and effective public administration, value creation and increasing employment, effective implementation of national policies such as sustainable development, equal services and legal security (Det Kongelige Kommunal- og Regionaldepartement, 2008: 9).

In 2008, the parliament voted for a watered down act, which meant that “the act did not replace the 19 county councils with fewer and larger entities” (Blom-Hansen et.al., 2012: 77-78) and that the re-arrangement was mainly realised through a new distribution of tasks and duties. With the turn of the year 2009 to 2010, regional authorities became mainly responsible for regional innovation, regional development

¹⁵⁶ In the beginning, the tendency was in favour of the *region model*, which mainly aimed at reducing the number of regional entities remarkably, later on, the opposite model, the *forsterket fylkesmodel*, gained ground. This model mainly preserved the existing administrative geography while modifying the competencies and duties of the regional level. The so-called *mellom model* was a compromise of these two models and would have caused major rearrangements of Norwegian administrative geography (Det Kongelige Kommunal- og Regionaldepartement, 2008: 15).

and highway improvement and maintenance. Additionally, they were given a say in many other areas, e.g. aqua culture, culture, quality management in primary schools, operation and financing of vocational schools, agriculture, forestry and fishery as well as a coordinating and initiating function with regard to public health.¹⁵⁷

Moreover, regional authorities today are co-owners of *Innovasjon Norge*¹⁵⁸, they elect half the members of the steering board in Norwegian state universities and have more influence on the designation of the leaders of specific cultural and regional institutions and on the newly founded regional research funds. Some regional entities are also responsible for the administration of water supply (Det Kongelige Kommunal- og Regionaldepartement, 2008: 7).

However, after a remarkable loss of power through the transfer of tasks from the regional level to central state agencies, the 2010 reform was a concession to the regional level. The reform did not reverse the transfer of tasks but granted influence, coordinating functions and initiating powers. Thus, it was less a simplification or an unbundling of administrative interrelations than their continuation or even the reinforcement of the need for transaction and coordination activities between the single administrative bodies.

In contrast to this increasing interweaving of the political levels, the pilot project in Sweden granted the regional level in Skania and Västra Götaland more autonomy; primarily through the transfer of central state tasks to the new county councils in the fields of regional planning and regional development policies (Bäck/Larsson, 2008: 211). Apart from these differences, Swedish municipalities - like their Norwegian counterparts - have a broad range of tasks and duties including schools, social services, care of the elderly and disabled, infrastructure, environmental protection, and parts of the rescue services.

In a nutshell, local government in Norway has become more complicated with the 2009 reform, as many issues have to be coordinated and decided across political levels today.

¹⁵⁷ http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/krd/tema/regional-_og_distriktpolitikk/organisering-roller-og-ansvar/fylkeskommunane-som-regionale-utviklings.html?id=528754 (23. October 2012, 15:18).

¹⁵⁸ *Innovasjon Norge* is a national development agency, that has the aim to further Norwegian business development and to profile Norway as a tourist destination. The Norwegian Ministry for Trade and Industry owns 51 per cent while the Norwegian regional municipalities own 49 per cent of the company (<http://www.innovasjon norge.no/Om-Oss/omoss/>; 25. July 2013, 13:46).

In contrast, the two regions in Sweden have relatively clear tasks and duties, which makes – despite potential political rivalries – the structural coordination within the Swedish political system much easier. Still, the Norwegian *fylkeskommune* and the Swedish region as well as the local authorities have a lot in common with regard to their tasks and duties, particularly as they have the right to raise taxes (Sandberg, 2005: 113). This is of importance when it comes to cross-border cooperation as there is a clear range of responsibilities where the actors can take decisions and implement them independently. Having discovered the institutional background of the GO-Region's member organisations, the next section will provide insight on their strategic considerations and self-understanding with regard to cross-border cooperation.

5.2.2 Oslo Kommune

Being the capital of Norway, Oslo has a central position within the nation state both with regard to economy, politics, education and culture. *Oslo Kommune*, with its approximately 630,000 inhabitants, is the heart of the capital region and the most densely populated area in Norway. Politically, Oslo Kommune has a special status, being both a regional and a local authority, thus, having an outstanding position with regard to competences and duties and furthermore, has a strong standing as a political actor.

Oslo Kommune has a very detailed international strategy that is rooted in the municipal development plan of 2008, saying that the most important task of the city is to provide services to the population and to prepare and steer the development of the urban society of Oslo. Against that background, international cooperation is generally conceptualised as a cross-cutting element which regards all sectors of public administration, including public enterprises, and applies as guidelines for common action within specific inter-municipal arrangements like *Osloregionens Europakontor*¹⁵⁹, *Oslo Teknopol*¹⁶⁰ and *Visit Oslo*¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁹ *Oslo Regionens Europakontor* is the contact point for local and regional municipalities around Oslo to the European institutions in Brussels (<http://www.osloregion.org/norsk/>; 9. July 2013, 13:50).

¹⁶⁰ Oslo Teknopol is the joint regional development agency for Oslo Kommune and Akershus Fylkeskommune (<http://www.oslo.teknopol.no/MainMenu/news2/>; 9. July 2013, 13:52).

¹⁶¹ Visit Oslo is a joint stock company owned by local, regional and national companies operating within travel, tourism and transportation. It provides a broad range of services to visitors of the Oslo region (<http://www.visitoslo.com/en/about-visitoslo/>; 9. July 2013, 14:02).

Oslo's international strategy regards the city primarily as influenced by globalisation and Europeanisation. While globalisation in the applied understanding appears as a reference to more general changes on the international level, Europeanisation explicitly stands in the context of Norway's ties to the European Union via the EEC, and their impact on Norway's local authorities. Increasingly being influenced by the European internal market, environmental cooperation and social policy, the role of Oslo Kommune as a developer, purchaser, service provider and employer changes, too (Oslo Kommune, 2010: 4).

Being the only area within the country with the potential to become an internationally profiled business location, Oslo perceives itself not only as *the* gateway to Norway but the 'business card' for the whole country. Accordingly, a strong and competitive profile of the capital city is expected to have positive effects on the whole country and is regarded essential to profile and further Oslo's interests as an urban and capital area. With regard to the micro-level, the idea is that an attractive city for visitors and investments is good for the population in the city, too. Thus, it is regarded important to sustain the image of Oslo as a city of high life-quality, to continuously fight against poverty, to protect human rights and democracy and to work for social justice and sustainable development.

In order to strengthen Oslo as the whole country's business card, six secondary goals were defined. Oslo is supposed to (1) be open to share and gain knowledge with/from others in order to further develop its own services, (2) to participate internationally in order to influence decisions and initiatives according to its own interests, (3) to become one of the most innovative and competitive cities in Europe, (4) to sharpen its international profile, (5) to be an open city of diversity with opportunities for leading a life free of racism, prejudice and discrimination. Finally, being the location of the award ceremony of the Nobel Peace Prize, Oslo is to be profiled as the city of peace (Oslo Kommune, 2010: 5-10).

Although not fully participating in the EU, the international strategy names EEC and EU programmes, in particular the INTERREG programme, as important frameworks for international activities. The city administration is urged to use these tools and to actively participate in INTERREG projects, particularly in the context of the GO-Region and the Scandinavian Arena:

“Oslo kommune skal delta aktivt med prosjekter gjennom Interreg, og særlig i tilknytning til Gøteborg-Oslo-samarbeidet (GO) og Den Skandinaviske Arena som dekker strekningen Oslo-Gøteborg –København/Øresund” (Oslo Kommune, 2010: 6).¹⁶²

Apart from this focus on its near surrounding and particularly the mentioned cross-border arenas, Oslo also is supposed to profile Northern Europe as an attractive area through cooperation with other capital cities in the region, for example through the cooperation forum *Baltic Metropolises* (Baltmet) that covers Berlin, Warszawa, Vilnius, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm and St. Petersburg. Finally, the strategy mentions *Oslo Teknopol* as an important actor in this international context, yet, without specifying its role more in detail (Oslo Kommune, 2010: 8).

5.2.3 Göteborgs Stad

Gothenburg is the second largest city of Sweden. While the city has about half a million, the agglomeration includes about 900,000 inhabitants. Gothenburg is an important economic centre due to its strengths in car industry, trade, pharmaceutical and medical industries, and logistics. As an important seaport, Gothenburg has many international linkages.

However, the city of Gothenburg regards itself primarily as embedded in an EU-ropean context, therefore, international cooperation within the EU or financed through EU channels has priority. International activities of the City of Gothenburg are based on two documents: the directives for international cooperation and the international vision and strategy.

International cooperation in general is supposed to have an added value for Gothenburg's inhabitants and economy and to support the overall vision of a strong, competitive and sustainable city. International activities are seen of complementary or of alternative character for local or national approaches and are regarded as investment in the future (Göteborgs Stad, 2004: 1). In general, the city of Gothenburg defined three strategic areas of activity: a) development of the city's own activities, b) economic development and c) the observation of relevant international and national

¹⁶² *Oslo is supposed to actively participate with projects under the framework of INTERREG, particularly with regard to the Gothenburg-Oslo cooperation (GO) and the Scandinavian Arena reaching down from Oslo-Gothenburg to Copenhagen/Øresund.*

processes in order to be able to influence them when necessary (Göteborgs Stad, 2004: 2-3). While the strategy remains rather abstract, the directives refer to more concrete arenas of cooperation.

Apart from several national networks that help to apply for funding from EU programmes and initiatives, international activities of the City of Gothenburg are divided into three areas: (1) international organisations like the *Union of the Baltic Cities* (UBC), the *International Council for Local Environment Initiatives* (ICLEI) or *European Cities Against Drugs* (ECAD), (2) twin towns like Århus, Rostock or Chicago and (3) regional cooperation like the GO-cooperation and the Scandinavian Arena (Göteborgs Stad, 2005: 2-3).

The international strategy additionally gives us some key information on how regional cooperation in the Scandinavian Arena and the GO-Region is to be implemented:

“Implementering, rapportering och uppföljning av dessa samarbeten hanteras genom GO-sekreteriatet med placering på Business Region Göteborg. Business Region Göteborg samordnar Göteborgs Stads deltagande i de ovannämnda regionala samarbetena [GO-Region and Scandinavian Arena (M.S.)] samt sammanhåller rapportering och uppföljning av GO samarbetet till kommunstyrelsen i likhet med övriga internationella samarbeten som omfattas av kommunstyrelsens samordning. Stadskansliets internationella grupp har till uppgift att hålla sig informerad om aktuella aktiviteter samt svara för informationsspridning till berörda parter i staden” (Göteborgs Stad, 2005: 3).¹⁶³

This means that the city of Gothenburg transferred its interest representation and competences with regard to regional forms of cooperation to the *Business Region Göteborg (BRG)*. Thus, the BRG gets into a central position with regard to co-ordinating, reporting and implementing regional policies.

Therefore, the BRG, its tasks and its duties have to be included in the analysis, too. Not least, as the strategic documents of the City of Gothenburg do not provide detailed information on its specific purposes within the GO-Region. In that context, the BRG and its thematic focus can provide more insight into Gothenburg's specific perspective on the GO-Region.

¹⁶³ *Implementation, reporting and monitoring of these cooperations is conducted through the GO-secretariat localised with the Business Region Göteborg. Business Region Göteborg coordinates the participation of Göteborgs Stad in the above-mentioned regional forms of cooperation. The same holds for reporting and monitoring the GO cooperation to the municipal government like all remaining international forms of cooperation that belong to the responsibility of the city council. The international group of the city office has the task of keeping itself informed about current activities and safeguarding the dissemination of information to all parties concerned.*

5.2.4 Västra Götalands Region

As one of the former model regions, Västra Götalandsregion was founded in 1993 “as an amalgamation of four county councils. Just like Region Skåne, Västra Götalandsregion inherited the functions of the former county councils and gained responsibility for regional development from the central government offices on the regional level (Lidström/Sellers, 2011: 133-134).

“Today, Västra Götaland is governed by an assembly of 149 directly elected councillors. The assembly appoints a regional executive board and specialized committees. The region derives most of its resources (80 %) from the regional income tax. In the same way as Stockholm, the assembly has the full powers of deciding the level of its income tax” (Lidström/Sellers, 2011: 136).

Thus, Västra Götalands Region has become a rather powerful political actor on the regional level. International cooperation of Västra Götalands Region is geographically divided into three areas: the EU, the near surroundings, and others. Looking back to more than 50 years of cooperation, contacts to the neighbouring areas in Norway traditionally are most important among its regional and cross-border cooperation activities. The GO-Region, The Scandinavian Arena, Gränskommittén but in a wider sense also the North and the Baltic Sea Commission within the CPMR¹⁶⁴ stand in that tradition.¹⁶⁵

Being an economically strong area, particularly in transport and research, Västra Götaland also sees itself as part of the functional Baltic Sea Area. One of the directives formulated in the international action plan even asks for a stronger engagement of Västra Götalandsregion in Baltic Sea Cooperation through participation in the annual conference of the BSSSC, the Baltic Sea Strategy and the Baltic Development Forum, and to become a member of the BDF (Västra Götalandsregion, 2011: 2).

The international policy formulated in 2009 gives important information on the general definition of Västra Götalands Region’s international interests and their implementation. In the first part, Västra Götaland is described as increasingly

¹⁶⁴ CPMR stands for *Conference of Peripheral, Maritime Regions* and is both an interest group and think tank for the development of an integrated maritime policy across Europe. The CPMR is divided into geographical commissions that bundle regional interests and work for specific regional maritime policy. (<http://www.crpm.org/index.php?act=1>; 9 July 2013, 15:07).

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.vgregion.se/sv/Vastra-Gotalandsregionen/startside/Regionutveckling/Internationellt-arbete/Samarbete/> (12.11.2012; 15:34).

influenced by its surroundings, economic globalisation and European integration and is characterised by its location at a nation state border. Generally, internationalisation is perceived as a cross-sectional task that concerns all departments and policy fields. International activities are supposed to further regional development by strengthening the region's international position and competitive capacity through alliances that support the region's interests like attracting investments, workforce, and tourists and enhancing international competency among the citizens (Västra Götalands Region 2009: 1). Thematically, R&D/innovation, health and care, climate and energy, culture, life-long learning/mobility, maritime issues as well as transport/infrastructure, growth and employment are in focus (Västra Götalands Region 2010: 27-38).

Being part of the European multi-level system, regional administration is supposed to learn from international experiences, to be familiar with the developments within the EU in their field of responsibility and to support other actors in making international political contacts. Most interestingly, the document also describes principles for membership in organisations and participation in cooperation agreements with other regions. Based on democratic values and human rights, cooperation should be issue-oriented, in accordance with the regions' priorities, and have a defined time frame. In order to safeguard success and efficiency, accessibility and language capacity should be taken into account, sufficient personnel and economic resources should be provided and cooperation should be evaluated regularly (Västra Götalands Region 2009: 2).

From the perspective of the Västra Götalands region, the improvement of the transport infrastructure on a north-south axes via the Oresund region to the continent is in focus. Together with R&D, infrastructure belongs to the most important issues and main challenges of the GO-cooperation at the same time. Particularly infrastructure, its often-inherent boundary crossing character both regarding domestic administrative structures or international borders, makes it important to be in a dialogue with the affected neighbours. However, also the fields of maritime issues or biomedicine are important, not least as northern Europe's largest university hospital is located in Gothenburg and belongs to the responsibility of Västra Götalands Region. In conclusion, Västra Götalands Region has a very focused and clear understanding of how and why international cooperation is to be conducted.

5.2.5 Akershus Fylkeskommune

Akershus Fylkeskommune is characterised by close functional relations with the Norwegian capital and geographical proximity to the Swedish border. Regarding surface area, Akershus is relatively small but with regard to population it belongs to the most densely populated areas in Norway.

In a globalising world, Akershus regards its position as primarily influenced by Norway's participation in the EEC, which makes it, on the one hand, mandatory to implement EU regulations, while on the other hand it opens the doors for participation in EU funded projects (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 6). The political significance of regions in the EU, materialising for example in the AER, also has, due to its close relations, general consequences on the Norwegian regions and their political role, turning them into an important channel for Norway's active European policy (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2005: 4-5; 2011: 6).

The international strategy for Akershus fylkeskommune 2006-2009 is more of a conceptual character, mainly referring to the general political developments, the background provided through EU policies, and their impact on the regional municipality's international activities. However, the main targets for international engagement have, at large, remained unchanged until today: strengthening the region's competitiveness and innovation capacity, increasing expertise and youth exchange, and increasing international participation of municipalities, schools and businesses (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2005: 2/ 2011: 10).

In the international strategy for 2011-2014, Akershus fylkeskommune gives an overview of the role and the priority areas of its international activities. International activities are primarily seen as a tool to fulfil the overall task of the authority in a globalising context: to contribute to a good development within the region and to deliver good services for the population. Further, it is regarded as a tool for dialogue, learning and development in all policy fields. Finally, international competence makes the inhabitants of Akershus better prepared for living, studying and working in a multi-cultural and globalised society. From that perspective, international cooperation is of advantage in all political fields and provides a channel to influence the preconditions determined on an international level (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 4).

The international strategy for Akershus Fylkeskommune defines both geographical and issue-based priorities. While the geographical focus of Akershus Fylkeskommune is on Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea and Northern Europe, the core topics with regard to international cooperation are infrastructure, cluster and profile building, as well as youth (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 10).

Cluster and profile building activities focus on five areas: maritime industries, energy and environment, IT, medicine and health, and culture. The aim is to develop the region into a competitive, knowledge-based region, enhancing cooperation between economic, scientific and public actors and strengthening the region's international network through participation in networks, programmes and projects (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 12).

Another central aspect for regional and international cooperation is transportation and infrastructure, primarily the establishment of a modern and improved road and railway infrastructure in the Nordic Triangle (Stockholm-Oslo-Copenhagen). Transport infrastructure is important from Akershus's perspective for two reasons: (1) 50 to 60 per cent of its exports and a great deal of its imports is channelled through the corridor from Gothenburg and (2) one of the municipal's aims is to establish a polycentric city structure, for which excellent transport infrastructure is of key importance.

Nowadays, as the extension of the E6 – at least on the Norwegian side - is completed, railway has come in to focus, particularly the dissemination of the potential of a high-speed train connection in the corridor Oslo-Gothenburg-Copenhagen. These considerations also stand in the context of the planned extension of the inner Norwegian InterCity Triangle¹⁶⁶, which means better rail connections from Oslo to Lillehammer in the north, from Oslo to Halden in the southeast, and Oslo to Skien in the southwest. The end of the oil age makes it necessary, from the view of regional actors, to increasingly invest in infrastructure.

With regard to youth, the aim is to enhance the learning outcome in secondary education, to safeguard appropriate competences and skills for internationalised and knowledge-intensive employment, a good universal education, intercultural competences (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 16). Finally, one of the main aims is to

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.jernbaneverket.no/no/Prosjekter/Inter-City-/> (11. July 2013, 12:15).

improve the use of the funding opportunities provided by EU programmes, the Nordic Council and bilateral funds.

The channels to be used in order to forward Akershus' regional and international interests are: active participation in the GO cooperation, the Scandinavian Arena, the cooperation Oslo-Stockholm (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 14) and furthermore, networks like the BSSSC, METREX or the *Airport Regions Conference* (Akershus Fylkeskommune, 2011: 22). Thus, Akershus is a regional municipality with a distinct international profile, linkages and interests.

5.2.6 Østfold Fylkeskommune

Østfold fylkeskommune is located on the Norwegian – Swedish border. Generally, it is a more rural area with about 280,000 inhabitants, of which more than a third live in the agglomeration of Fredrikstad and Sarpsborg. Østfold's international activities are based on two documents: a strategy for international engagement (2007) and an action plan for international cooperation for the years 2012-2015 (2011).

The strategy for international engagement provides the general goals and guidelines for Østfold's international activities and regards them as a cross-cutting element and a natural part of the daily work of the single sectors of public administration. In face of the EU enlargement in 2004, Østfold and Norway in general saw the need to intensify activities for closer contacts and cooperation with both authorities in the single EU states and in Brussels, in order to safeguard information supply and the influence on important issues as well as to use the opportunities for participation in single projects. In order to be able to participate in EU projects, it is, moreover, regarded necessary to hold regional structures compatible with the overall development of the EU (Østfold fylkeskommune, 2007: 2).

Østfold's geographical focus is on the neighbouring areas in the North, the Baltic Sea Region and Europe. Important arenas for international cooperation identified by Østfold are AER, CPMR/North Sea Commission, BSSSC, GO-cooperation, the Border Committees Østfold-Bohuslän and Østfold-Värmland, Östlandssamarbetet¹⁶⁷,

¹⁶⁷ *Östlandssamarbetet* is a cooperation forum of 8 regional municipalities in the south-eastern part of Norway. It includes Akershus, Buskerud, Hedmark, Oppland, Oslo, Telemark, Vestfold and Østfold. They cooperate with regard to regional development, education and international cooperation. In the international committee observes European policy-making and aims to put

Osloregionens Europakontor, EU programmer, particularly INTERREG, and programmes on training and education (Østfold fylkeskommune, 2007: 3-5). In the action programme 2011-2015, some new arenas were added, such as the Innovation Circle Network or the Scandinavian Arena. Moreover, the action plan points to international funding opportunities, primarily the EU programmes like INTERREG and the Nordic Council of Ministers' programmes.¹⁶⁸

Moreover, Østfold Fylkeskommune is the host for the Norwegian administrative office of the INTERREG IV A programme, Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak, for the period 2007-2013. Its task is to administer the funding provided by the Norwegian Ministry of Local and Regional Government.

International cooperation is supposed to give new impulses for regional development. According to the action plan, guidelines for cooperation foresee local and regional cooperation with Norwegian and foreign partners, using international funding, contributing to the participation of young citizens in international arenas, focussing on concrete results of international cooperation, and supporting cooperation partners in other countries and regions in their work for a balanced social, economic and political development (Østfold Fylkeskommune, 2011: 24).

Main topics for international cooperation are: regional airports, prevention and health, reduction of drop-out from secondary schools, young entrepreneurship, culture, climate and energy, water quality, experience economy, local development, road and rail infrastructure between Oslo and Copenhagen as well as Oslo and Stockholm, sustainable administration of sea and coastal areas (Østfold Fylkeskommune, 2011: 28-32). The county's focus within GO-cooperation is transport infrastructure, which also explains its strong interest in the COINCO north project and the Scandinavian Arena.

forth the regional level's interests European policy issues (http://www.ostfold-f.kommune.no/modules/module_123/proxy.asp?D=2&C=349&I=20393; 18. July 2013, 13:11).

¹⁶⁸ In its action plan, the Østfolds fylkeskommune also points to other sources. These concern very specific and limited fields of cooperation, like Fredskorpset, which primarily organises exchange programmes between Norway and Asia, Africa or Latin America (<http://www.fredskorpset.no/en/about-us/>; 11. July 2013, 13:31).

5.2.7 Gränskomitén, Academia and Business

Apart from these political members, the GO-Region also includes other actors: (1) the presidents of the Universities of Oslo and Gothenburg, (2) representatives for Swedish and Norwegian business and (3) representatives from the cross-border organisation Gränskomitén.

Both the representation of academia and business go back to the adoption of the triple helix model with the new statutes in 2003. Business is represented through the vice director of the West Sweden Chamber of Commerce and the regional director for Oslo and Akershus in the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (*Næringslivets Hovedorganisation* (NHO)), the largest interest organisation for enterprises in Norway. The representatives of business and academia have the fact that they do not belong to the genuine political arena in common – they are neither elected democratically nor do they have the political power to implement taken decisions. Much more, they function both as a kind of sensor and consultant that help to identify the needs in face of the overall goal to become a successful, competitive and liveable region.

Moreover, in 2011 Gränskommittén joined the GO-Region. Gränskommittén is a cross-border organisation of 22 local municipalities and the counties of Østfold fylkeskommune and Västra Götalandsregion at the southernmost part of the Norwegian-Swedish border. Founded in 1980, Gränskommittén's task is to further the development of the border region and to establish a forum for issues concerning both countries. The region covered by Gränskommittén has the closest and most frequent contact patterns along the Swedish Norwegian border with regard to traffic, trade, tourism and commuting (Gränskommittén, 2011: 2).

During the last years, Gränskomiteen has been involved in projects covering the area of the Scandinavian Arena. *COINCO north* and its successor project *The Scandinavian 8 million city*, have respectively had a strong focus on transport infrastructure. As well as the extension of the E6, Norway's and western Sweden's artery towards the continent, particularly the question of a better railway transport between Oslo and Gothenburg including a double track is of high interest for Gränskomitén as regional actors see potential for more economic growth (Gränskommittén, 2012: 7). Due to its border crossing character infrastructure, projects create the need for more coordination of the affected parts as reflected in the joint efforts of Gränskommittén, GO-region, Västra

Götalandsregion and Østfold Fylkeskommune to realise a meeting with the responsible ministers for transport infrastructure. This supports the argumentation that communications and infrastructure are the main reasons for Gränskommitténs inclusion in the GO-region.

5.2.8 Business Region Göteborg and Oslo Teknopol

In addition to these formal members of the GO-Region, the two regional development agencies, Business Region Göteborg (BRG) and Oslo Teknopol, informally became part of the GO-Region's institutional architecture.

Since the structural reform of the GO-Region, the secretariat of the GO Region is neither located within the administration of one of the member organisations nor totally independent. Much more, it is located within the *Business Region Göteborg (BRG)*¹⁶⁹ a non-profit company founded by the city of Gothenburg and thirteen surrounding municipalities in 2000¹⁷⁰.

The basic idea behind the BRG is to regard its geographical area as “one integrated region in terms of the economy, the labour market and infrastructural investments.”¹⁷¹ Thus, the *BRG*'s task is to support regional business development and competitiveness enhancing “a good business climate through constant improvements in infrastructure, education, the environment, housing and services, etc.” (Business Region Göteborg, 2007: 7).

¹⁶⁹ The regional *Trade and Industry Development Agency* (Näringslivssekretariatet) founded in 1977 was reformed around the year 2000 and re-named to Business Region Göteborg (BRG). Since then the municipalities in the Gothenburg area are represented within the steering committee of the BRGR through three representatives of the Göteborgs Regionens Kommunalförbund GR (The Göteborg Region Association of Local Authorities). Moreover, the financial contribution of the local authorities, which is channelled through BRG was doubled in 2002 from 10 to 20 million SEK and remained on that level until today, the city of Gothenburg annually contributes about 10 million SEK. (<http://www.grkom.se/download/18.6dc39a00139b9d351318000853/Verksamhet+och+budget+2002.pdf>; 12.11.2012, 14:21; <http://www.grkom.se/download/18.6e4e442f137dc81efd980001373/Verksamhet+och+budget+2013.pdf>; 12. November 2012, 14:25).

¹⁷⁰ The BRG is composed of 13 local municipalities, of which Gothenburg is the largest and contributes the largest share to the organisation's budget. 12 out of 13 local municipalities are also represented in Västra Götalands Region, while Kungsbacka, the southernmost local municipality within the BRG, is located in Hallands county.

¹⁷¹ <http://www.businessregiongoteborg.com/huvudmeny/aboutus/13municipalities.4.1cd7d86f104f07fa6ae8000326.html> (23.October 2012, 12:01).

Following the logic of the triple helix model, the BRG is localised in an intermediary position between trade and industry, public sector and research, in order to stimulate innovation and development within the region. Its activity areas are wide-ranging from business development, cluster management, national and international marketing, networking, matchmaking, provision of services to international cooperation (Business Region Göteborg, 2007: 7). The fact that the city of Gothenburg transferred the tasks of coordinating, reporting and implementing regional cooperation in the GO-Region and the Scandinavian Arena to the BRG (Göteborgs Stad, 2005: 3) shows that activities in the GO-region are seen as part of regional business development policy – a genuine activity area of the BRG. However, reading BRG's annual report, international cooperation appears to be more a side aspect to its general activities like business development and place marketing.

This arrangement could also be interpreted to be of a strategic character, as the political aspect is put to the margins, setting a third political actor with relatively low democratic legitimacy into a central position with regard to regional cooperation. But it can also be interpreted as a manifestation that regional actors understand regional cooperation in the GO-Region primarily as regional economic development policy-making.

In addition to that, *Oslo Teknopol* enters the ground when doing research on the most important INTERREG project between 2008 and 2011 within the GO area, the COINCO north project. Both the *BRG* and *Oslo Teknopol* were the lead partners for the Swedish the Norwegian side respectively. While the then CEO of Oslo Teknopol, Knut Halvorsen, was the contact person on the Norwegian side, Madeleine Johansson, an employee at the GO-Region's secretariat located under the umbrella of the *BRG*, was the Swedish contact person for the project.¹⁷² Formally, Oslo Teknopol had not appeared to be an important cross-border actor until this lead partnership in the COINCO north project.

Oslo Teknopol was officially established as an inter-municipal corporation on 1. July 2002. Its predecessor was the so-called *Næringslivssekretariatet for Oslo og Akershus* (engl. *Oslo Business Region*), already started in 1998. A re-launch in 2002 was undertaken in order to overcome some of the deficiencies of the former structure; primarily unclear tasks and competencies, and as a consequence, growing

¹⁷² <http://www.go-regionen.org/download/18.44efdd0e12bb298fa858000206/Ans%C3%B6kan+COINCO+North.pdf> (12. November 2012, 12:33).

dissatisfaction with the organisation's output¹⁷³ but also as changes in the national legislation for inter-municipal cooperation had made an organisational re-arrangement necessary. In order to mark the reorientation of the organisation's strategy towards a more knowledge-based innovation policy, its name was changed into Oslo Teknopol (Oslo Teknopol, 2008: 3). Oslo Teknopol got a professional administration and was subordinated to a political committee consisting of political representatives elected by the owners, Oslo kommune and Akershus Fylkeskommune. Since then, Oslo Teknopol's tasks have comprised: contributing to a stronger contact and coordination between R&D and economy within the region in accordance with the businesses' needs and leading the marketing of the Oslo region as an international business region (Oslo Teknopol, 2008: 3).

The BRG and Oslo Teknopol were not simultaneously put in charge of cross-border cooperation. After this arrangement had stood the test on the Swedish side, the Swedish partners proposed that the Norwegian side organise in a similar way but it took a while until this opinion gained ground in Oslo, too. Thus, structures became more similar and procedures in the GO-Region more dynamic. However, due to an economic imbalance in 2010, growing differences between the owners and leadership of Oslo Teknopol and increasing critique on the organisation's impact, Oslo Kommune and Akershus Fylkeskommune decided to dissolve the organisation and establish a new one in 2012 (Oslo Business Memo, 2011: 6).¹⁷⁴ This process has not been completed until today, leaving the future development of this informal arrangement open.

The most interesting aspect is that regional development agencies play important roles for regional cooperation in the Gothenburg-Oslo Area. Apart from differences in formulations, both BRG and Oslo Teknopol have a congruent mission, namely to enhance regional business development applying the triple helix model. Differences between both regional development agencies come to the fore regarding their institutional stability. While the BRG is a stable and well-equipped organisation, Oslo Teknopol is a rather small organisation and has repeatedly been an object for critique

¹⁷³ Oslo Byråd 2002: Evaluering av næringslivsrådet og næringslivssekretariatet for Oslo og Akershus – Forslag til videreføring. (<http://www.sak.oslo.kommune.no/dok/Byr%5C2002%5CBR1%5C2001039175-1.htm>; 12. November 2012, 11:30).

¹⁷⁴ <http://de.scribd.com/doc/72930115/Oslo-Business-Memo-Nr-5-Uke-46-2011-NETTVERSJON> (12. November 2012, 12:30; Oslo Business Memo, Nr. 5, Jg 2, week 46, 2011).

and discussions. Nevertheless, the fact that regional development agencies are part of the wider institutional setting of the GO-Region shows that local politicians see cross-border cooperation primarily as a part of regional innovation and development policy.

5.3 Contextual Perception

The contextual perception of the GO-Region is relatively weak. The GO-Region's outward-oriented communication is relatively rare, there are only a few brochures available and apart from that there are hardly any publications from the outside world that refer to the GO-region. One of the few wider-reaching publications where the GO region appeared was in a supplement to the newspapers Aftenposten (6. June 2012), Göteborgs Posten (7. June 2012) and Svenska Dagbladet (10. June 2012) published by the Norwegian –Swedish Chamber of Commerce (*Norsk-Svensk Handelskammer*). Apart from some basic facts, the short article gives an overview of the history, activities and main topics of GO-Region.¹⁷⁵

The GO-region is not a host for a specific INTERREG sub programme but is covered by the INTERREG IV A sub-programme Kattegat-Skagerrak that also covers Northern Denmark and large parts of southern Norway (see 3.1.3 Figure 2). Thus, the visibility both on the national level and the European level is comparably low. Furthermore, the GO-Region is not part of the NCM's Gränshinderforum and does not receive Nordic funding. However, internally, some efforts have been made e.g. through the 'ungdomens fredspris' against racism and for multicultural understanding and school exchange initiatives.¹⁷⁶

Interviewees emphasise that the national level, to some extent, is informed about the developments in the region primarily as the nation state stands for co-funding of the INTERREG-projects and as light-house projects like COINCO north also arouse significant interest on the national level. Thus, the GO-Region still has a lot of potential to increase its contextual perception regarding both the wider regional system as well as society.

¹⁷⁵ http://issuu.com/arnold-media-communication/docs/se_norsksvenskhandelskammer?e=2914242/3204174 (17. July 2013, 9:49).

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.go-regionen.org/huvudmeny/utbildning/projekt.4.26d15e9911ad89104158000149985.html> (17. July 2013, 9:17).

5.4 Symbolic Shaping

Since its formalisation in 1995, the GO-cooperation was given both a logotype and a slogan (Figure 9). The logotype consists of the two blue interwoven letters G and O in the centre surrounded by a blue oval flanked by a red and a yellow section on its left and right hand side respectively. Thus, the logotype expresses the focus on both cities and the regions connecting them and the two nation states symbolised by genuine national colours, red for the Norwegian and yellow for the Swedish part. Below the logotype we find the name Göteborg-Oslo-regionen followed by the organisation's slogan. This logotype is used for official, external and internal communication within the GO-Region. Until 2009, the GO-Region's slogan was 'two countries one region', yet after a while, regional players realised that this slogan was too distant from the actual conditions within regional cooperation.



(Source: Göteborg-Oslo Regionen 2010a:1)

Figure 11: Logotype and Slogan of the GO-Region

All in all, political actors point to four insights that had the change of the slogan as a consequence: (1) The vision 'two countries one region' was not to be turned into reality, until both cities were connected by a high-speed train (2) the region was not

based on a 'common identity', and (3) the region still is composed of two countries with two labour markets and (4) - this was the inspiration for the new slogan - that there are still a lot of opportunities within the region.

Consequently, the slogan was changed in 2009 into 'borderless opportunities' (gränslösa möjligheter). Some interviewees even add that the new slogan is of a more inclusive and open character both inwards, particularly with regard to the regional bodies that were included in 2003, and outwards.

Moreover, a vision for the region was formulated:

"Göteborg-Oslo-regionen ska vara en hållbar och attraktiv region i Europa med gränslösa möjligheter, dit människor och företag söker sig för att uppleva, bo, verka och utvecklas" (GO-Region, 2010b: 1).¹⁷⁷

In 2011, the Contact Group initiated a process of strategy formulation, the so-called *framtidiskussion*, which is supposed to identify important issues, to look over the cooperation areas and their organisation, to develop a common idea of how the cooperation's goal and vision is supposed to develop and be implemented, to strengthen political engagement and to increase the visibility of the cooperation's aims and vision (GO-Region, 2012: 1).

Apart from these initiated discussions, there is only one single topic that occurs fairly often in the GO-Region's publications, and that is transport infrastructure, both in terms of the extension of the E6¹⁷⁸ and the railway. Railway has particularly come into focus as the motorway has almost been completed. The primary aim is to reduce the rail transportation time between Oslo and Gothenburg from four to two, or two hours twenty minutes, and in a wider perspective to link Oslo with the European high-speed train network (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2008: 8; 2009: 4; 2010a: 4; 2011a: 4).

There is also a tendency to create a common perception according to the basic facts of the cross-border region in form of a selection of cross-border statistics presented in the section facts and figures in the GO-Region's annual report.

¹⁷⁷ *The GO-Region shall be a sustainable and attractive region in a Europe of borderless opportunities, where people and businesses settle in order to experience, live, work and develop.*

¹⁷⁸ It is worthwhile mentioning that the extension of the E6 also included a bridge building project, the Svinesund Bridge. Its opening was on 10 June 2005, almost exactly a hundred years after the dissolution of the Norwegian-Swedish Union. However, it has not gained a comparable symbolic importance for the GO-region as the Oresund Bridge has for the Oresund region.

In the first available annual report, this section presented 13 figures while in the latest from 2011 it comprises 19 figures, ranging from, for example, the physical border length of 15 kilometres, to the number of inhabitants, flight destinations and passenger numbers, cross-border vehicle traffic, to Norwegian-owned companies in Sweden as well as commuters and moves across the border. Thus, the annual report lays down certain empirical facts that are supposed to objectively verify the existing linkages between both countries and give regional cooperation a legitimate basis (Göteborg-Oslo-Regionen, 2008: 4; 2009: 6; 2010a: 6; 2011a: 6).

Although significant attempts to give the GO-Region a symbolic dimension have been made, a regional we-feeling in the GO-region spread most among the actors directly involved, the region does not matter in the everyday lives of the overall population.

5.5 Institutionalisation of the GO-Region

This chapter has shed light on the different dimensions of the process of the institutionalisation of GO-Region. Having its origin in bilateral cooperation between the cities of Gothenburg and Oslo, the cities are still important drivers of cooperation in the GO-Region. However, as the old bilateral form of cooperation had come to its limits at a certain point of time new actors were included and a general re-arrangement of structures was started.

Institutionally, the GO-Region has a rather strong organisation, with a clear structure and particularly, clearly defined tasks for the single working groups. Cooperation in the GO-Region covers a wide range of issues with a strong focus on transport infrastructure. Infrastructure has also been the main trigger for including new members into the organisation. As the implementation of common decisions is voluntary, consensus is the major decision-making rule. The GO-cooperation has a relatively small budget and limited human resources.

The territorial background of the GO-cooperation is characterised by strong similarities in the Norwegian and the Swedish local government system. Diversity with regard to representation in the GO-Council goes back to the fact that the Norwegian part of the region is composed of three local government unities, while the Swedish part only comprises two units. Membership is characterised by a certain plurality through the application of the triple helix principle. Formally, the emphasis is on political members,

which co-opt a small number of actors from business and academia. Since 2011, it has even included representatives of another cross-border organisation. Still, the principle that both national sides are equally represented is safeguarded with regard to all members.

The GO-Region shows certain features that resemble a network structure. These comprise the informal arrangement regarding the role of the two public-owned regional development agencies BRG and Oslo Teknopol for the administrative part of regional cooperation and the overlapping member structures since Gränskommittén joined the GO-Region. The intersecting membership goes back to the fact that Östfold fylkeskommune and Västra Götalands Region are represented in both regional forums, the GO-Region and Gränskommittén.

Moreover, the fact that BRG and Oslo Teknopol were put into such a central position also points to the general idea that member organisations have about the GO cooperation, namely regional and business development in face of increasing regional competition.

Symbolic shaping has been an aspect in the GO-cooperation from the early beginning. Regional players tried to establish a concentrated version of the GO-Region through the development of a common logotype and a common slogan. While the logotype has been used for years, the slogan was changed in 2003 in order to bring reality and slogan into a more realistic balance between feasibility, stimulus and inspiration for regional cooperation.

Apart from logo and slogan, there is no distinct story-telling about the GO-Region, though there are some rudiments like the repetition of specific regional facts, for example in the annual reports, that always comprise a basic fact sheet including number of inhabitants, vehicles crossing the border, regional flight passenger numbers, air freight, Norwegian-owned enterprises within the region, commuters or border trade.

Contextual perception of the GO-Region is low, not least as the organisation's efforts have been very low. However, the aim to work more on that dimension has recently been formulated.

According to most of the member organisations, the cities of Gothenburg and Oslo build the core of the GO-Region, while the regional entities also participate but with a less

accentuated role. The GO-Region is mainly regarded as a forum to make contacts, where people can meet and potentially establish a common project. Moreover, it provides a channel and is a forum to collectively push common interests on other political levels, where each member organisation alone would only be able to make a slight difference. Effectiveness of the GO-cooperation varies with regard to the policy area and is, for the time being, strongest in infrastructure. Finally, regional actors emphasise the importance of continuity and stability of the persons involved, this creates a common basis of trust, and facilitates cooperation within the region.

6. Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

In the 1990s, various initiatives to increase cooperation between Helsinki and Tallinn were taken. In 1995, the idea of the twin cities (kaksoiskaupungit) was launched in the context of Estonia's official application for EU membership (Heliste et.al., 2004: 46) and Finland's accession to the EU. At the same time, the booklet *Helsinki-Tallinna – kaksoiskaupunki: Tarua vai totta?*, published by the Helsinki Tallinn Society¹⁷⁹, gave inspiration for the further development of the twin-cities. The book comprises many short contributions by different actors on many different issues ranging from the status quo of cooperation in many different fields, to its potential and prospects for the future. In the section on the future of the twin city, the idea of connecting both cities through a tunnel across the Finnish Gulf was presented and has since then repeatedly served as a source of inspiration for cooperation across the Finnish Gulf. However, the main precondition for the formulation of these ideas was the major geo-political changes around the year 1990. Until then, geographical proximity to the Soviet Union had been – though in varying intensity – the most determining contextual variable for both countries, particularly since World War Two.

After the Soviet Union had occupied Estonia in the 1940s and turned it into a Soviet republic, Finnish-Estonian relations were relatively rare - until the 1960s, when Urho Kekkonen visited the Estonian Soviet Republic as the first Finnish president. Through the resumption of regular shipping traffic between Helsinki and Tallinn in 1965, the former connections between both countries were re-established symbolically (Heliste et. al., 2004: 43). Yet passenger traffic across the Finnish Gulf remained on a relatively low level until the late 1980s and the early 1990s. In 1988, there were about 200,000 passengers crossing the Finnish Gulf while there were about 6.06 million in 2002 and about 6.9 million in 2010.

¹⁷⁹ The Helsinki Tallinn Society (Helsinki-Tallinna seura r.y.) was established in 1991 (<http://hetas.wordpress.com/>; 3. September 2013, 9:41). The organisation's aim is to further cooperation between Helsinki and Tallinn, both with regard to politics and business, as well as to enhance social and cultural competences.

There are many references to the special ties between Soviet Estonia and neighbouring Finland.¹⁸⁰ Some point to cultural proximity, in particular the similar languages (Pikner, 2008: 215; Brune, 2006: 65), the “availability of Finnish television programmes in Northern Estonia since 1958” (Lauristin, 1997: 35; Heliste et.al., 2004: 43) and “the stimulating impact of large numbers of Finnish visitors [(... and that) c]ontacts with Finland involved significant numbers of intellectuals, who often took a strong interest in Estonian culture, and not just ‘vodka tourists’” (Raun 2001:22).¹⁸¹

Later on, the fall of the Iron Curtain became a landmark for Finnish-Estonian relations, cross-border traffic between both countries increased rapidly during the 1990s, and has laid the basis for a close relationship between both countries until today. External disparities in taxes, price level and wages were a crucial trigger for increased cross-border traffic in the early 1990s. Due to continuous convergence of both countries during the last decades, relations have become more normal, though it still is very common among Finns to travel to Estonia, not least as services are much less expensive.

Moreover, the new geo-political constellations had, in both countries, a very distinct orientation towards the Western World as a consequence. Finland used the opportunity to take “its place in the core of Western Europe’s deepening integration (...)” through EU membership in 1995 and the decision to participate in the EMU in 1999, turning Finland into “the only Nordic country to belong to the EU’s inner circle” (Pesonen/Riihinen, 2002: 263).

During the Cold War, the guidelines for Finland’s foreign policy had been defined through its *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance* (TFCMA) (1948–

¹⁸⁰ Vahur Made provides, in his article *Estonia and Europe: A Common Identity or an Identity crisis*, more details on “(t)he idea of connecting Estonia to the Nordic cultural area” (Made, 2003: 186-187).

¹⁸¹ Cultural proximity between Estonia and Finland seems rather uncontroversial in the literature. However, this wide-spread consensus on the importance of cultural similarities should not overshadow the cultural differences between both countries. For example, the official *lingua franca* of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is English, while at large, conferences, presentations and speeches are most frequently given in the mother tongue with simultaneous translation to either Finnish, Estonian or English. Taken together with the fact that it is mostly Estonians who are able to understand Finnish, the emphasis on the similar languages in practice is difficult to comprehend. Moreover, and despite all historical ties and connections, Estonia and Finland are built upon different reasons of state. There are large ideological differences between a well-established consensual Nordic welfare state and the market liberal model adopted by Estonia, which are also reflected in the respective local government systems (Sootla/Toots, 2006: 167; Lepik, 2010: 34; Heliste et.al., 2004: 50-51).

1992) with the USSR (Beyer/Hofmann, 2011: 288). Power constellations after World War Two became apparent rather early as Soviet troops remained on Finnish territory until 1956, while the preamble of the TFCMA acknowledged Finnish neutrality. Moreover, the TFCMA prohibited Finland from joining any alliance directed against the Soviets (Ingebritsen, 1998: 99).¹⁸² Under these preconditions Finland “became and remained conventionally neutral from 1955 until it joined the EU” (Beyer/Hofmann, 2011: 295). For the Soviets, the treaty was a means to preclude the Western World from attacking the Soviet Union traversing Finnish territory, while for the Finns it was a means to ensure both Finland's political independence and its continued existence as a liberal democracy in face of the powerful neighbour in the east.

Yet, EU-membership was hardly a topic in Finnish politics until the Swedish government had sent its official application to Brussels (Luif, 2007: 84). When considerations of EU membership started, the political elite in Finland was, in general, quite in favour of joining the EU. From a Finnish perspective, EU membership was a way to confirm its long repressed Western identity, and not as a threat to national sovereignty and freedom of action. The establishment of a political union made EU membership interesting for Finland in terms of security policy considerations, and was actually seen as a possible substitute for the country's traditional policy of neutrality (Rieker, 2004: 375-376).

As neutrality was basically a result of strategic considerations, it was relatively easy for Finland to condense its broad conception of neutrality to its core, defined as ‘militarily non-aligned’. This redefinition paved the way for Finland's EU membership and its engagement for a “strengthening of the European security community” as a militarily non-aligned EU country with close ties to NATO (Möller/Bjerreld, 2011: 366). Finally, in 1994, a consultative referendum was held in Finland with the result of 57.1 per cent of the votes in favour of EU membership (Raunio/Tiliikainen, 2003: 12).

To an even larger extent, Estonian independence in 1991 paved the way “to rejoin the international community” (Raun, 2001: 28) and particularly the western European community of shared values (Schürmann, 2001: 88-89).

¹⁸² However, geographical proximity to the Soviet Union did not mean that Finland did not have an integration policy until the 1990s. Besides membership in the Nordic Council, Finland signed a free trade agreement with the European Economic Community in 1973, became a member of EFTA in 1986 and the Council of Europe in 1989. But the need for good relations with Russia made it important to follow a balanced approach, represented through the neutrality doctrine, towards the west.

The Soviet re-occupation of Estonia in 1944 had far reaching consequences on the Estonian society and did not only mean the introduction of “one-party rule from Moscow and the eradication of private enterprises, but also an orchestrated effort in denationalization” implemented through mass deportations, executions, cultural repressions as well as the systematic placement of Russian-speaking immigrants (Kello, 2012: 28). These measures have left many scars in Estonia’s historical memory. Thus, independence in the 1990s became a return to national sovereignty also in form of Estonia’s return to the international community it had belonged to in the interwar period.

Besides membership to the United Nations (1991) and the OSCE (1991), it also became a member of the CBSS in 1992, the Council of Europe in 1993, and later on of NATO and the EU (2004). In the early years of Estonian independence, NATO membership was the top priority. As NATO membership seemed to be out of reach in the mid 1990s, the Estonian foreign minister at that time, Toomas Hendrik Ilves¹⁸³, declared that joining the EU was going to be Estonia's main foreign policy goal from that moment onward (Park, 2005: 199). Since then, Estonian foreign policy concentrated on EU accession, these efforts resulted in the invitation of the European Commission to open negotiations for accession in 1997.

While relations between Estonia and the European Union in the beginning focused on democratic institution-building, the prospect of becoming a member of the European Union shifted the focus towards regulatory alignment with the *acquis* consisting of Chapter 21 on regional policy and coordination of structural funds, the adaptation of institutional arrangements to the principles of EU regional policy and the adoption of the NUTS classification system. Moreover, the Commission tried to influence the candidate countries through the Phare-programme and personal contacts with the candidate states in Brussels, and through delegations of the Commission in the respective countries (Kettunen/Kungla, 2005: 360/361).

With regard to Estonian-Finnish relations, particularly the prospect of both countries being part of the European Union brought momentum to cooperation. These intensified

¹⁸³ Toomas, Hendrik Ilves was the Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1996-1998 and 1999-2002. After a period as a member of the European Parliament (2004-2006), Toomas Hendrik Ilves has been the president of Estonia since 2006.

contacts between Finland and Estonia resulted in two reports issued by the Finnish and Estonian prime ministers in 2003 and 2008.

The report *Estonia and Finland in the European Union (2003)*, elaborated by Esko Ollilla for the Finnish and Jaak Jõerüüt for the Estonian part, gave some ideas on the future of cooperation between both countries. The report's general starting point is that Finland and Estonia share common characteristics and have common interests. The aim was to identify potential fields of cooperation under the prospect of the changing context, including the intensification of informal contacts between politicians and administrations, policy-making towards the EU, environmental issues, the free movement of people, culture and education and economy. With regard to the capital cities, they recommend investigating the construction of a rail connection between Tallinn and Berlin and a potential link to Helsinki via a rail ferry connection and increasing lobbying for that on the European level (Ollilla/Jõerüüt, 2003: 8), and to work for the establishment of a EURES cross-border partnership between the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn (Ollilla/Jõerüüt, 2003: 6).¹⁸⁴

Five years later, the Finnish prime minister Matti Vanhanen and his Estonian colleague Andrus Ansip decided to give new impulses to Estonian-Finnish relations, and issued the report *Opportunities for Cooperation between Finland and Estonia* with a focus on potential for cooperation in education, research and innovation and energy. Besides general approaches to Finnish-Estonian relations in the respective fields of interest, the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn appear several times in the report, reflecting the high importance of both capital cities under the umbrella of Finnish-Estonian relations. This includes increasing cooperation between universities, better and more diversified transport connections, e.g., helicopter shuttle¹⁸⁵ and train ferry, joint marketing in tourism, or the establishment of a Helsinki-Tallinn Europe Forum – an international business and political conference (Blomberg/Okk, 2008).

These two reports provide evidence on the high priority of Estonian-Finnish relations and they also indicate that Finnish-Estonian relations go far beyond diplomatic customs covering a wide range of issues on the working plane. Moreover, due to

¹⁸⁴ According to the EURES map 2013, the Helsinki-Tallinn area has not succeeded in establishing such an EURES cross-border partnership (<https://ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=56&acro=eures&lang=en>; 6. August 2013, 11:32).

¹⁸⁵ Until 2006, both cities were connected via a helicopter shuttle. In a crash in 2005, 14 people, including the entire crew lost their lives and the regular service was laid down in 2006. Several attempts to re-establish a regular service have failed until today.

geographical proximity and as ferry traffic between both countries is almost exclusively channelled through the ports of the two capital cities, Helsinki and Tallinn have a 'gateway-function' to the respective country.¹⁸⁶

In addition, already in the beginning of Estonian independence, numerous bilateral contacts between both cities were established. Many practical issues were debated and settled during that time, for example, transport between the two cities, how to keep the Gulf of Finland ice-free during winter, or how to handle natural disasters and accidents in the strait between both cities. The geographical distance between both cities is 88 km, it takes about 3 hours 20 minutes to go by car and ferry or 1 hour 40 minutes by high-speed catamaran. The following chapter will further investigate how these contacts were embedded into the institutional framework of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn and provide insights on the institutional, symbolic and contextual shaping.

6.1 The Institutional Structure of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

The formal institutionalisation of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn was the signing of the Euregio Charter on 22 June 1999, and goes back to three factors: (1) early contacts that were established between Helsinki and Tallinn, (2) the EU's enlargement and regional policy particularly aiming at cross-border cooperation, as well as (3) the initiative of Harju County Government and Uusimaa Regional Council to start negotiations about the establishment of a cross-border body (Pikner, 2008: 217- 219).

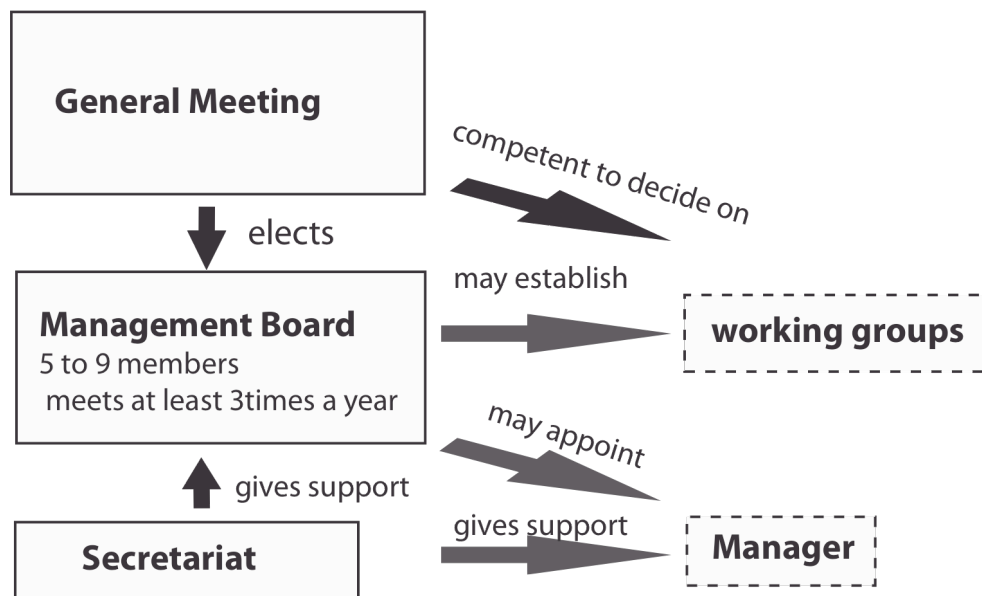
From the beginning, membership comprised five organisations, for the Finnish side, the city of Helsinki and Uusimaa Regional Council, and for the Estonian side, the city of Tallinn, Harju County Government and the Union of Harju County municipalities. The main objectives defined in the charter were "to provide an umbrella organization for planning and implementing regional development projects, and [to] co-ordinate local and regional activities in the following aspects of joint interests" (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 1999: §3). These joint interests include cooperation between political bodies, international cooperation, business, education, culture, environment, spatial planning, development policies and infrastructure as well as rescue service.

¹⁸⁶ Sometimes the lines between Estonian-Finnish relations and cooperation in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn even seem to be blurred as some interviewees happen to talk about Finnish Estonian relations and cooperation in the Euregio at the same time.

Although the charter is the founding document of cooperation of the Euregio, it only provides basic information about its institutional structures composed of four elements: the Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio Forum, which corresponded to a general assembly where ‘political representatives of the parties meet’ (§ 4.1); the management committee composed of high-ranking civil servants (§ 4.2), the secretariat made up of single representatives from each member organisation (§ 4.3), and working groups to be established by the management committee (§ 4.4) (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 1999).¹⁸⁷

The institutional design of the organisation was adapted and regulated in more detail in the statutes approved in 2003, when the organisation was also registered as a non-profit organisation. Figure 11 gives an overview of the *Structures of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn* according to the agreement signed in 2003.

Structures of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn



(own figure)

Figure 12: Structure of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

¹⁸⁷ For a more detailed overview of the early structures in the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, see Jussi Jauhiainen, 2002: Territoriality and Topocracy of Cross-Border Networks, Journal of Baltic Studies XXXIII, No 2, 156-176, here 167-170.

The *General Meeting* of its members is the highest decision-taking body of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, consisting of “political representatives of the five network partners”¹⁸⁸. It is responsible for the approval of the activity report, annual accounts, the activities of the management board and the negotiation of the membership fees. It appoints and removes members and substitutes of the Management Board, the controller and the internal auditor. Moreover, it decides on the objectives, principles and general lines of cooperation as well as the statutes and membership; it directs and supervises the activities of the Management Board. The General Meeting has a quorum when all five founding members are represented (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 6-8). Each member of the association has one vote in the general meeting and decisions are taken if “four-fifths of the members of the Association who participate in the meeting or their representatives vote in favour of the resolution. A resolution for changing the objectives or amending the statutes of the Association and for the dissolution of the Association must be unanimous” (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 8.3).

The *Management Board* consists of at least five and not more than nine members, and substitutes elected during the annual general meeting for the term of one year. At least half of the members of the management board have to reside in Estonia. Each of the member organisations names a member and a deputy member of the management board. The members of the Management Board appoint a chairman among themselves. The main task of the management board is to prepare the working programme, to guide the work of the secretariat, to call for the forum conferences to be held, and to make proposals to the members with regard to finances. The Management Board meets at least three times a year; it has a quorum if at least four-fifths of its members of the Management Board are present. Its competences include managing the activities of the association, preparing the activity report, annual accounts and the budget, implementing resolutions of the General Meeting as well as disposing the assets of the Association. Moreover, the Management Board can establish working groups in accordance with the tasks and the approved joint measures (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 9-10).

¹⁸⁸ Most interestingly this not insignificant information is not provided in the formal statutes but on the Euregio’s website on Euregio fora, while the exact constellation in the Forum remains unspecified (<http://www.euregio-heltal.org/fora/>; 12. August, 2013, 13:09).

The *Secretariat* is the advisory working group to the manager; it comprises representatives from the single member organisations from the administrative level. It makes proposals to the committee with respect to the improvement of operations and has a reporting function towards the Management Board (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 12).

Interestingly, the statutes sparsely give evidence about the composition of the General Meeting of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. It only says that the General Meeting of its members is “the highest body of the Association” (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 6.1). Members are defined as the founding members of the Association and potential other members that “may be reputable legal entities of the Republic of Estonia and the Republic of Finland” (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 4.1). Thus, the General Meeting formally includes only five representatives, which is comparably a rather small number and which has consequences on the perception and backing of the Euregio within the member organisations, and also with regard to questions of legitimacy. According to informal practice, the Euregio Forum established in the 1999 charter has become the forum for broad discussions among the member organisations’ representatives, yet, the procedures of decision-making have not been opened up for a broader inclusion of actors.

The *Management Board* as “the main working body” seems to play a very important role in the institutional structure of the Euregio (Pikner, 2008: 221). Here, the regulations in the statutes are comparably detailed: The Management Board includes five to nine members, which elect a chairman among themselves. Moreover, at least 50 per cent of the members of the Management Board have to reside in Estonia (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 9.1). It is interesting that some of the competencies of the Management Board remain in the ‘may’ category (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 11), turning the appointment of a manager or the establishment of a working group into an option rather than a basic element of the organisational structure.

External representation of the association is preformed “by the chairman of the Management Board and one member of the management board jointly” (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2003: § 13). In a nutshell, the statutes appear to be relatively open, leaving space for informal regulation. This flexibility of the Euregio’s statutes is reflected in the informal adaptations that took place in 2011. Governance structures in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn were relatively stable until 2011 when they were

informally adjusted for at least a transitional period of time. In general, there were positions that the management of the Euregio was acting too independently. Some of the regional actors criticised that the secretariat was trying to sell its ideas to the member organisations and formulated the demand to counter this development.¹⁸⁹

The idea was to increase the activity of the member organisations in order to safeguard actions being in congruency with the individual partner's interests. In order to increase the member organisations' control, the position of a full-time manager of the Euregio was disestablished. Today, the secretariat rotates between the single member organisations. This change in the governance structures seems problematic according to some of the interviewees, and was to be evaluated early in 2012 but continues to exist until today – without a change in the formal statutes.¹⁹⁰

Moreover, the network suffered due to the economic crisis, under a cut-back of its budget and human resources, as the city of Helsinki withdrew the person who – in times of the old structure - used to represent the secretariat on the Finnish side. Some activities had to be postponed, therefore regional actors are re-launching some topics at the moment. This counts, for example, for the project *Knowledge Arena*¹⁹¹ which tries to bring universities, spin-off companies and innovative ideas together in order to better use the potential for the region and to be more successful in the international context.

Until 2008, the Finnish part of the Euregio contributed more than half of the budget of the Euregio.¹⁹² Since then, financial burdens have been shared equally (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2006: 6). This change in the financing of the organisation was of high symbolic importance as it brought cooperation on a more equal basis, and, formally, an end to the *little brother – big brother* constellation (Heliste et.al., 2003: 46). On the

¹⁸⁹ The central position of the manager within the organisation of the Euregio is - though more neutrally formulated - also reflected in Pikners article saying that: "The role of the manager is very important in initiating interregional activities and involving actors" (Pikner, 2008: 221).

¹⁹⁰ In the article *Policy entrepreneurship and multilevel governance: a comparative study of European cross-border regions*, Markus Perkmann differentiates Euroregions that "have achieved a certain capacity to act and those which are mere ceremonial envelopes or administration vehicles for EU programmes" (2007b: 862). In face of the discussions in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, there seems to be no agreement so far on the direction of the organisation's development and profile.

¹⁹¹ <http://www.euregio-helta.org/activities/finalized-projects/knowledge-arena-twin-region-of-arts-and-science/> (4. September 2013, 20:12).

¹⁹² In 2001, for example, the Finnish partners stood for 70 per cent of the Euregio's funding (Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, 2002: 7).

Estonian side, the city of Tallinn stands for the highest share of the finances. The budget of the Euregio is not fixed in the statutes but is regulated by negotiations. Unfortunately, there is no data available on the overall budget of the Euregio. The annual reports only provide information about staff costs, which have been around 40,000 Euros per year since 2008. During the three years from 1999 to 2001, the budget of the Euregio was about 130,000 Euros (Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, 2002: 7). Helsinki's budget plan of 2013 commits 31,000 Euros for the Euregio. In the context of the general cuts due to the financial crisis, it seems improbable that the budget has been raised significantly, so we can estimate that the budget does not exceed between 100,000 and 125.000 Euros. Daily work in the Euregio is organised according to three-year plans, which are updated annually. For the time being, the period was prolonged in order to fit better into the next INTERREG programme period.

6.2 Members of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, their Domestic Backgrounds and Strategies

Membership of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn is composed of five organisations.¹⁹³ The city of Helsinki and Uusimaa Regional Council for the Finnish part and the city of Tallinn, the Harjumaa Regional Council and the Union of Harju County Municipalities. *Figure 13* gives a geographical overview of the area covered by the Euregio's member organisations. This brief enumeration already points to a basic characteristic regarding the institutional shaping of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn: the unequal representation of the national parts involved. The subsequent chapter provides general background information for this constellation, referring to national administrative systems in Estonia and Finland (territorial shaping) before providing details on the interests and strategies of the single member organisations.

¹⁹³ It is interesting that Lepik and Krigul point to the triple-helix character of cooperation in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn (Lepik/Krigul, 2009: 43), although universities and business are not formally incorporated into its organisational structure. The attribution of a triple helix character obviously stands in the context of their inclusion in project work. As project work is not the primary task of the Euregio, and as none of the interviewees referred to that feature, this study does not regard the institution of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn as being of a triple helix character.



(own figure)

Figure 13: The Geographical Area Covered by the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

6.2.1 Local Government in Estonia and Finland

Both Finland and Estonia are strongly centralised countries with a strong national government and a strong local level. In both countries, the capital regions have an outstanding role as national economic growth motors and political and cultural centres as they record the highest standard of living.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, both countries are characterised by strong regional disparities, a declining population in general, and migration from the peripheral areas towards the urban centres and their environs (Ryynänen, 2006: 305). Apart from these common challenges and characteristics, major structural differences come to the fore with regard to the single local government systems.

Similar to the other Nordic countries, the strength of Finnish local municipalities is based on the right to levy taxes, moreover, they have “a wide range of responsibilities, a large degree of autonomy from the state and well trained staff” (Haveri/Laamanen,

¹⁹⁴ While Helsinki is also the academic centre of Finland, the academic centre in Estonia is Tartu, the second largest city of the country.

2006: 316). Municipalities can decide to cooperate in order to provide specific local services and “they have in final resort the responsibility for most societal tasks and social service”. The central state “provides guidance and supervision to local governments through its regulative power and influences the financial status of local governments in an indirect manner by means of the subsidies it grants through its general economic policies” (Bergmann-Winberg, 2000: 164).

Regional policy was hardly an issue in Finland until the 1970s. In face of rural depopulation and raising emigration, regional policy came into focus and a law on regions and regional administration was adopted in the Finnish parliament in 1975 (Kinnunen, 2004: 9).¹⁹⁵ While plans for a reform of regional administration were continuously debated during 1980s, the largest local government reform in Finnish history introduced an intermediary level in face of EU accession in 1995.¹⁹⁶

This meant the end of the ‘traditional duality’ of the national and the local level. The overall goal of the reform was to simplify administrative structures and to enhance efficiency, which basically meant a downsizing of provincial state administration from twelve to six provinces (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 2004: 37-40).¹⁹⁷

“Thus, the basis of the new approach to the Finnish regional policy regime can be viewed in terms of outlining a response to the challenge of reconciling the enduring Finnish tradition of a powerful unitary state bolstered by strong local municipal autonomy with the need to move towards a compromise package that retained the strong national level steering functions while promoting the development of a functionally based regional level” (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 2004: 34-35).

Since then, regional administration has been divided into two sectors: the Regional State Administration and the local government-bound Regional Councils. These changes are, to a large extent, the consequence of the process of Europeanisation that

¹⁹⁵ First laws on regions as administrative units were already made in the 1960s but it was only in the 1970s that a more coherent regional policy was formulated (cf. Kinnunen 2004: 9)

¹⁹⁶ Rizzo points to the fact that three forces simultaneously pushed in a similar direction: Europeanisation, political and socio-economic forces (2007: 164). For more information on the Europeanisation of Finnish local and regional government, see Kull, Michael, 2009: *Local and Regional Governance in Finland – A Study on Institutionalisation, Transformation and Europeanization*, Halduskultuur (10), pp. 22-39.

¹⁹⁷ Lähteenmäki-Smith even says that “[o]ne could even argue that the Finnish region (maakunta) is strictly speaking neither political nor functional as, politically, the regional level is indirectly elected and in the sense subordinate to the local level with strong autonomy, and functionally the main focus has shifted from the local to the sub-regional level, i.e. to the local labour market areas or functional regions (seutukunta)” (2004: 37).

assigns the regional level an important function in the process of European unification.¹⁹⁸ Moreover, the post-EU-accession system was, in particular, intended to strengthen the regional level. In order to ensure the influence of the regional level in decision-making, the state regional administration, for instance, was to have an opinion procedure for the regional councils before making funding decisions on regional development measures (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 2004: 36).

Being a branch of the central state government on the regional level, the regional state administration is basically of bureaucratic character, mainly implementing policies made on the central level. While there had been a multitude of agencies¹⁹⁹ and offices representing the authority of seven different ministries on the regional level, the 2010 reform integrated these into two regional authorities: *The Regional State Administrative Agencies (Aluehallintovirasto, AVI)*²⁰⁰ with six offices, and the *Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (Elinkeino-, liikenne- ja ympäristökeskus, ELY)*²⁰¹ with 15 offices (Ministry of Finance Finland, 2011: 3).

Regional Councils²⁰² have an indirect democratic legitimacy as their members are nominated politically for a four-year term by the home institutions, namely the municipalities composing the regional level. Each municipality holds a number of seats and voting power, based on the rules of each regional council (Kull, 2009: 27). Thus, regional councils are statutory joint municipalities that operate on the principles of municipal self-government but “lack political and legislative power, and have only minimal financial power” (Rizzo, 2007: 165). Regional Councils are responsible for regional development and planning, in concrete, they formulate regional programmes, plans and implementation plans, draw up regional EU programmes and plan land-use.

¹⁹⁸ For example, the EU structural funds, their inherent development ideology and its programme-based regional policy required some adaptation in Finnish public administration and its organisation (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 2004: 36/Kull, 2009: 27).

¹⁹⁹ These were the State Provincial Councils, the Employment and Economic Development Centres, the Regional Environment Centres, Environmental Permit Authorities, Road Regions, Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorates (Ministry of Finance Finland, 2011: 3).

²⁰⁰ The six Finnish Regional State Administrative Agencies are responsible for “base public services, legal rights and permits, occupational safety and health, environmental permits, fire and rescue services and preparedness, police” (<http://www.avi.fi/web/avi-en#.UgSquWS1s5t>; 9. August 2013, 10:41).

²⁰¹ The 15 Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment have three areas of responsibilities: business and industry, labour force, competence and cultural activities; transport and infrastructure, environment and natural resources (<http://www.ely-keskus.fi/web/ely-en>; 9. August 2013, 11:02).

²⁰² Regional Councils consist of the Assembly, the Board and the Office.

Their most important task is to formulate the economic development strategy for the region (Kinnunen, 2004: 9-11; Sjöblom, 2011: 247-248).

Though the dominance of the central government in regional development functions cannot be overlooked either, as it defines the general objectives of regional policy for each electoral period (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 2004: 38) and as the overall programmes “are jointly drawn up for four years by state authorities, municipalities, and organizations involved in regional development and other similar parties” (Rizzo, 2007: 165). Moreover, the regional level has both an outward and an inward oriented dimension, serving as a channel to represent the local municipalities’ interests on the international level and as a political level that local governments voluntarily can transfer tasks to.

Thus, the Finnish regions represent many of the general traits of Europeanisation: growing awareness of European integration and its impact, the need to adopt more active (though also reactive) strategies and to form new alliances and cooperative contacts, while also retaining specific Finnish characteristics that can sometimes place (if not material, then ‘psychological’) restrictions on these strategies: the tradition of centralisation, hierarchical structures and the natural emphasis on neighbouring areas in terms of cooperation (Haveri/Laamanen, 2006: 315; Sjöblom 2011: 247).

In contrast to these structures that, despite all changes, have a long tradition, Estonian local government is inseparably interrelated with Estonian independence from the Soviet Union in the 1980s and the aim to de-sovietize, democratise and decentralise. In fact, the idea of introducing local self-government was implemented fairly early in the first political reform, even before the official declaration of independence (Kettunen/Kungla, 2005: 361; Almann, 2007: 126; Sootla/Toots, 2006: 168).

The *Local Self-government Foundation Act* was passed on 10 November 1989 and established the basis for the Estonian two-tier system of local government. Towns, boroughs and rural municipalities composed the first level, while counties composed the second level (Hillebrecht, 1996: 32; Mäeltsems, 1999: 64).²⁰³

Three years later, the Estonian Constitution (Eesti Vabariigi põhiseadus, PS), which was adopted in 1992, prescribed basic regulations for local self-government in the articles

²⁰³ Undine Bollow provides more detailed information on the early phase of decentralisation in the end of the soviet period (see Bollow, 1998: pp. 102-4).

154 to 160. However, the Constitution remains ambiguous with regard to local government, prescribing the establishment of a single level local government system based on towns, boroughs and rural municipalities, while also saying that “[o]ther units of local government may be formed on the basis of and pursuant to procedures provided by law” (§ 155 PS).

These provisions were transferred into law by the *Local Self-government Organization Act*, adopted on 2 June 1993 which is, despite numerous amendments, the basis for the local administration system of today (Mäeltse, 1999: 65). Local authorities were turned into one-level institutions and the directly elected county councils, where the Soviet *nomenklatura* held especially strong positions, were abolished as local government units (Lauristin/Vihalemm, 1997: 106; Herv. i.O.).²⁰⁴ Thus, the regional level lost its status as “a level entity under law” and was turned into a representation of the central state level on the regional level, represented through a county governor “appointed to office for a term of five years by the Government of the Republic on the proposal of the minister of regional affairs” (Pöld/Aaviksoo/Laffranque, 2011: 249).

In that manner, “two autonomous realms of public authority [that (M.S.)] do not have direct institutional contact at county level” were established (Sootla/Kattai, 2011: 583). Almann criticises the poor quality of the Estonian legislation on local government as “relations between the state and the local government were not shaped to completion”, thus, the relations between the central and the local level are characterised by overlapping and double responsibilities, resulting in a continuous debate on and repeated attempts for a reform of local and regional government (Almann, 2007: 126-127). Most notably, the centralised system of taxation established in 1993 and “the system of autonomous policy-making and spending practices of local government” were hardly compatible (Sootla/Toots, 2006: 169; see also Pöld/Aaviksoo/Laffranque, 2011: 250).

Due to these inaccuracies, the county governors managed to informally expand their power position and to become a voice of local interests on the central state level during

²⁰⁴ Peter Bötter adds in his dissertation *Leviatan i arkipelagen. Staten, förvaltningen och samhället* (Leviathan in the archipelago. State, administration and society), that the reforms of public administration 1992/93 also aimed to establish political steering over public administration and to restructure these for more efficiency (2007: 210). Moreover, he gives remarkable insight on the evolution of the government machinery in Estonia, using Estonia as a case study to show that, in contradiction to the Weberian thesis, weak governments produce a strong bureaucracy, weak governments can also produce a weak public administration.

the 1990s. As this was increasingly perceived as a threat and restriction to the local and national level's authority, its power was curtailed sharply, for example through restricted access to the central state government, financial restrictions and the transfer of competences (Sootla/Kattai, 2011: 583). According to some of the interviewees, there has been a gap until today, between the public perception of the regional level and its formal competences. For many citizens, the regional level should safeguard local interests while de facto, its competences comprise coordinating the units and supervising the legality of actions and the enactment of legislation (Sootla/Toots, 2006: 169).

Instead of forming a democratically legitimated regional level, local governments are encouraged to form associations of local authorities on the regional level in order to coordinate their positions and represent their interests (Tönnisson, 2006: 9). Furthermore, they have to give their consent on legislation that concerns local government because they can be delegated tasks of service provision and regional coordination and as they provide joint services in refuse and water management, transport, sports, etc. (Sootla/Kattai, 2011: 586). However, these local government associations of a county have a comparably weak position as NGOs within the local government structure, lacking a formal status in the Estonian institutional architecture:

“This has created a real contradiction between the content of the tasks performed by them or that may be transferred to them in the future and the legal status needed for the performance of tasks” (Almann, 2007: 128).

Nevertheless, they have an important balancing function as they represent the local level in the annual negotiations on redefining local government responsibilities and central government support funds. Finally, in accordance with the Estonian public management doctrine,

“that all activities not linked with the exercise of authority, and ones that could be managed in economically feasible ways by the private sector, should be delegated or devolved away from LG [Local Government (M.S.)] to the private sector”

local bureaucracy comprises only a limited number of public servants (Sootla/Toots, 2006: 171). For example, half of the Estonian local municipalities comprises less than 2,000 inhabitants. The administration of these small municipalities includes, in more than 80 per cent of the cases, only up to ten civil servants; a real local bureaucracy only exists in the largest and some of the medium sized municipalities (Sootla/Toots, 2006:

171-172). This limited number of employees in the public administration undoubtedly also has consequences on the strategic capacity of a local entity and its engagement in surplus activities, like interregional or international cooperation and projects.

In summary, in both Finland and Estonia, local government today is an expression of the new political constellations from the 1990s. Finland strengthened the regional level in order to better fit the European policy framework, while in Estonia, inclusion of the regional level into central state administration was part of the process of dealing with the soviet past. Thus, these rearrangements meant, for both countries, an opportunity to express their re-orientation towards Europe. Still, both systems are characterised by strong differences, particularly regarding the size, tasks and the capacity of public administration on the local and regional level. Against this background, the subsequent section explores the Euregio's member organisations' positions and priorities regarding regional cooperation.

6.2.2 Helsingin Kaupunki (City of Helsinki)

The city of Helsinki has about 600,000 inhabitants and is the heart of the agglomeration called Greater Helsinki Region, with about one million inhabitants also comprising the three local municipalities of Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen. With regard to international relations, Helsinki has traditionally strong connections to the city of Stockholm. Especially since the 1990s, new international contacts were established, and particularly Tallinn "has become an important city for economic and cultural interaction" (OECD, 2003: 51).

Generally, Helsinki's priorities for international activities and participation in EU projects have undergone a process of re-orientation, putting emphasis on their effectiveness and on the issues of accessibility, competitiveness and innovative service provision (Helsingfors Stad, 2013: 13).

According to Helsinki's international strategy, the aim of international action is to develop the metropolitan area of Helsinki into a centre of science, art, creativity, innovation, business, and good services. The aim is furthermore, to generally strengthen the city as a multi-cultural metropolis and a Baltic Sea logistics centre. Helsinki's main partner cities are Tallinn, St. Petersburg, Stockholm and Berlin (City of Helsinki, 2009: 4). Tallinn is often referred to, particularly with regard to

accessibility/transport and logistics (Emerald, 2008: 4; Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2010: 65).

Most interestingly, the international strategy presents the development of the so-called 'Gulf of Finland economic area', the triangle Helsinki – Tallinn - St. Petersburg, as the area that will unfold remarkable impact on Helsinki's development, having the potential also to arouse interest in a global perspective (City of Helsinki, 2009: 9).²⁰⁵ The international strategy sees great potential to arouse global interest, if the Gulf of Finland region is developed into a progressive, well-functioning economic and commuting area (City of Helsinki, 2009: 10). This is also to be achieved through the strengthening of the cooperation in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn (City of Helsinki, 2009: 14).²⁰⁶

An important precondition for such a positive regional development is "[s]mooth and fast transport connections with Tallinn and St. Petersburg" (The City of Helsinki, 2009: 10). Long-haul connections to cities in Asia and Rail Baltica are expected to strengthen Helsinki's external transport connections and support the city both as a logistics hub in the Baltic Sea Region and between east and west.

In the recent strategy for the general development of Helsinki, the twin-city is referred to in the chapter 'A viable Helsinki' and the headline 'an internationally known city'. The twin-city is regarded as an important tool that will considerably raise Helsinki's attractiveness for Russian and Asian tourists and investments (Helsingfors Stad, 2013: 13).

Thus, there is no explicit reference to the institution of Euregio Helsinki Tallinn in the most important strategic documents of the city of Helsinki. Relations with Tallinn are mostly grouped under the label of the twin-city, which describes a wider framework of cross-border cooperation and which has more of a bilateral connotation.

²⁰⁵ The spatial vision of a *Gulf of Finland Region* including Helsinki, St. Petersburg and Tallinn was formulated in the INTERREG IIIC project PolyMETREXplus RINA (City of Helsinki, 2007).

²⁰⁶ The importance of the regional perspective of the Gulf of Finland is also repeated in the Publication *Prosperous metropolis - Competitiveness Strategy for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area* (Culminatum Innovation, 2012).

6.2.3 Tallinna Linn (City of Tallinn)

The city of Tallinn and its functional area is the uncontested political and economic centre of Estonia. About one third of the population of Estonia lives in Tallinn and half of the investments made in Estonia are made in the city (City of Tallinn, 2008: 14). Moreover, Tallinn shares close ties with its environs that provide e.g. housing, recreation and building ground to both investors and private persons. From an international perspective, Tallinn sees itself primarily as embedded in a Baltic Sea context (City of Tallinn, 2008: 13/2004: 3).

The introduction to the development plan 2009-2025 points to the multitude of actors that are involved in the implementation process and emphasises this interconnectedness as follows:

“Since the impact area of Tallinn extends much further from the administrative boundary of the capital, the cross-border cooperation must be made more effective in implementing the development plan, primarily in the direction of Harjumaa and Finnish capital region Uusimaa” (City of Tallinn, 2008: 6).

This excerpt reflects Tallinn’s broad understanding of cross-border relations, simultaneously referring to domestic administrative borders and the nation state border in the Finnish Gulf. Apart from this rather early note of the Helsinki Region in Tallinn’s development plan, there is only one further reference to the city of Helsinki in the context of efforts to be made to establish a common ticket system for public transportation in the metropolitan areas of Helsinki and Tallinn (City of Tallinn, 2008: 75). The Tallinn Strategy 2025, published in 2004, has more references to the Finnish partners across the Gulf. Most interestingly, it also reflects the ambiguity of the relations between both cities, reflecting that they, on the one hand, are competing with each other for example as a dwelling area or with regard to foreign investments, while on the other hand, being strong cooperation partners (City of Tallinn, 2004: 5). Moreover, Tallinn wants to become an active part in the twin-city process on the basis of its own interests (City of Tallinn, 2004: 7).

While the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is not mentioned at all in Tallinn’s development plan, it is mentioned in the city’s innovation strategy:

“Cooperation must also continue with our close neighbours, especially through promotion of Tallinn and Helsinki in the twin cities of research project (making use of and developing the complementary resources of the two regions). The

objective of Helsinki-Tallinn Euregio, a non-profit organisation, is to involve universities, other institutions of higher education, research institutes and the business sector in the development activities of cities and the regions surrounding them. This is a good starting position to promote the internationalisation of Tallinn's institutions of higher education."²⁰⁷

The aim is to enhance Tallinn's international visibility and to become an attractive place for foreign students and researchers in specific key fields as well as to generally improve education in Tallinn as "[t]here can be no doubt that international cooperation, including in the fields of education and research, supports innovation." This also points to Tallinn's perspective on the Euregio as primarily being a channel for cooperation on the issues of innovation and science. Moreover, the wider geographical perspective requires putting the potential of the Baltic Sea region, including St. Petersburg, to better use.²⁰⁸

However, according to the department for strategic planning, infrastructure is the most important issue for the time being. This topic is debated and investigated in the HTTransplan²⁰⁹ project that also has links to the Rail Baltica project which is supposed to link Helsinki via the Baltic States and Warsaw to Berlin. Finally, it is interesting that the issue of transport is associated with the city of Helsinki, while innovation is seen in the context of the Euregio.

6.2.4 Uudenmaan Liitto (Nylands förbund/Uusimaa Regional Council)

In January 2011, Uusimaa Regional Council and Eastern Uusimaa Council merged, now the region has about 1.5 million inhabitants and covers, to a wide extent, the functional area of the Greater Helsinki Region. With the fusion of both regional entities, a common interim development plan and strategy, based on the assumption that the existing complement each other, was formulated.

This combined development programme says, with regard to international cooperation, that the Uusimaa Region shall become the most important centre for

²⁰⁷ <http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/Tallinn-Innovation-Strategy-2009-2013>; (1. August 2013, 9:38).

²⁰⁸ <http://www.tallinn.ee/eng/Tallinn-Innovation-Strategy-2009-2013>; (1. August 2013, 9:38).

²⁰⁹ Under the umbrella of the INTERREG IVA project HTTransPlan- Helsinki-Tallinn Transport and Planning Scenarios, a wide range of actors from politics, academia and business collaborate in order to improve transport connections across the Finnish Gulf in order to improve the reliability of transport connections and to safeguard that they better meet the customers' needs (<http://www.euregio-heltal.org/htransplan/>; (4. September 2013, 20:23).

innovations in the Baltic Sea Region and that cooperation and networks are to be developed regionally, nationally and internationally, particularly towards Estonia, St. Petersburg and the Nordic countries (Nylands Förbund, 2011: 13). Furthermore, Uusimaa Region sees itself primarily embedded in competition with metropolitan regions in Europe and particularly the Baltic Sea Region (Nylands Förbund, 2011: 16-17).

Apart from its responsibilities in the field of regional development, Uusimaa Regional Council also provides a channel for local municipalities to represent their interests on the international level.

From Uusimaa's perspective, transport infrastructure is the most important topic for cooperation in the area, the region sees a general need to enhance intermodality. A joint structural plan for transportation has been debated recently, following the fusion of Uusimaa and Eastern Uusimaa Regional Council. Most interestingly, a fixed or improved link towards Tallinn is not debated in detail but it is the only reference point outside of Finland, together with an improved rail connection towards St. Petersburg. (Uudenmaan Liitto/Nylands Förbund, 2010: 13.)

In the region's report and financial statement of 2012, there are some references on the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn in the context of the strategic goal to enhance the county's international competitiveness within the Baltic Sea Region. Here, the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn appears as an important perspective that helps to strengthen Uusimaa in international urban competition (Nylands Förbund, 2012: 24). Moreover, Tallinn is referred to in the context of the domestic and international regional development corridors, particularly in the context of the results of the HTTransplan project. However, this section also makes clear that from a planning scenario, the connection to the south is also, and potentially primarily, thought to be of international importance in the wider Rail Baltica context (Nylands Förbund, 2012: 24) and not as an axis between both cities. This is also in agreement with the position formulated in Uusimaa's report on regional planning, mainly saying that a railway connection would connect Finland to Central Europe and that it would not have an impact on demography and labour market but on international transportation (Uudenmaan Liitto/Nylands Förbund, 2010: 21).

However, the understanding of the potential link across the Finnish Gulf as a connection of international importance could also be based on wider strategic considerations that aim to increase the projects' assertiveness in the national arena.

6.2.5 Harju Maavalitsus (Harju County Government)

Harjumaa is the second largest county in Estonia with regard to surface area and with 552,940 inhabitants, the most densely populated county in Estonia. It covers most of Tallinn's hinterland and commuting area. Most of Harju's inhabitants (393,231) live in the city of Tallinn. Thus, Harjumaa comprises more than a third of the overall Estonian population of 1.3 million inhabitants.²¹⁰

Being the representation of central state administration on the regional level, Harju County Government is not a regional actor in the traditional sense but in fact a national actor on the regional level. To its tasks belong safeguarding a balanced development of the region and general planning. However, there are only limited opportunities to forward the development of the region, as the main task is to monitor the legislation of the local municipalities (Harju Maavalitsus ja Harjumaa Omavalitsute Liit, 2010: 30).

In 2010, Harju County Government formulated, in agreement with the Union of Local Municipalities, a new development strategy for the year 2025, based on a comprehensive overview of basic figures such as demographic development, economic development, tax revenue, public finances etc. and four scenarios that give an idea of how the region could develop in the future (Harju Maavalitsus ja Harjumaa Omavalitsute Liit, 2010: 21-28).

The basic vision is that Harju County will belong to the internationally active and competitive capital regions in the Baltic Sea Region, including active citizens, good environmental and living conditions, dynamic enterprises and a balanced polycentric urban structure and good relations between administration, economy and science including a longterm sustainable spatial planning. The most important point is to start a process of structural change towards a knowledge-based economy and to actively work for a polycentric urban structure supported by a better-integrated public transport system. Moreover, the aim is to intensify cooperation with the cities of

²¹⁰ All data refers to the year 2012 and was provided by statistics Estonia (<http://www.stat.ee/>; 13.August 2013, 11:17).

Stockholm, Helsinki and St. Petersburg in the field of education (Harju Maavaalitsus ja Harjumaa Omavalitsute Liit, 2010: 30).

Most interestingly, there is no direct reference in the strategic paper to the Euregio, there is only one reference that points to the distinct relations between the region and Helsinki in the section of necessary studies, analysis and plans for the implementation of the vision 2025, namely the feasibility study on the improvement of the railway connection between both cities (Harju Maavaalitsus ja Harjumaa Omavalitsute Liit, 2010: 41).

6.2.6 Harjumaa Omavalitsuste Liit (Union of Harju County municipalities)

The Union of Harju County Municipalities (UHCM) is the regional association of local municipalities in the area covered by Harju County. Founded in 1992, it defines its task to further cooperation between public actors and economy in order to work for a good business development within the region. Representing the local municipalities' interests in the comprehensive process of regional development, the UHCM regards itself as an important partner in related strategic issues.²¹¹ However, the activities of UHCM are predominately inward oriented, in form of the conduction of projects and studies as well as the provision of trainings and seminars for its member organisations. UHCM's international activities are relatively limited, concentrating on similar organisations in Sweden and Finland (Harjumaa omavalitsuste Liit, 2008: 4). The relations to Finland are conducted through the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, bilateral contacts to Uusimaa Regional Council exist.²¹² The profile of UHCM with regard to regional cooperation is relatively low. In the annual reports there is only a hint made towards the Euregio through a reference to the financial contributions made to the organisation (Harjumaa Omavalitsuste Liit 2009: 4/2010: 5/ 2011: 4) and on the general participation in activities in the Euregio (Harjumaa Omavalitsuste Liit 2008: 4) in the fields of international cooperation.

This points to a relatively low profile of the local municipalities within the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn and is also reflected in the opinion of other regional actors that point to its NGO character which provides only a weak power basis in addition to the

²¹¹ <http://www.hol.ee/uldinfo>; (31. July 2013, 11:25).

²¹² <http://www.hol.ee/valissuhted-61>; (31. July 2013, 11:24).

generally weak position of the municipalities themselves in face of limited financial and human resources.

Thus, the interest of UHCM in cooperation with the Euregio predominately seems to be involved and to be informed, proactive impulses are neither documented by the UHCM nor expected by other regional actors.

6.2.7 Local Government Systems, Diverse Actor Constellation and Asymmetry

The Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn's membership structure is strongly influenced by its territorial background in the two nation states, and thus brings central state agents, NGOs as well as local and regional municipalities together. Accordingly, these structures provide different scopes of action for the single member organisations. Due to a lacking regional level on the Estonian side, there are remarkable differences between both local government systems that need to be overcome in the institutional structure.

Moreover, the structures in Estonia have the consequence that the capacity of local municipalities varies remarkably. While the administration of the city of Tallinn is fairly large, the smaller local municipalities particularly, have to cope with limited resources in time, work force and knowledge of how to conduct projects within their own institutions. This diversity has also consequences on their view of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn. Particularly the smaller Estonian partners have the wish that the Euregio also works as a project organisation. Furthermore, the wish for a symmetric representation within in the organisation has, so far, not been translated into its structural arrangement.

Moreover, it is interesting that Helsinki and Tallinn introduce a wider regional concept through the reference to St. Petersburg, although cooperation with Russian partners also raises scepticism and reservations, particularly among the Estonian partners.

6.3 Contextual Perception

Since the Euregio's foundation, several attempts have been made to raise its contextual perception. The most prominent measure to increase the Euregio's contextual perception is the annual Euregio Forum, an annual conference where an unspecified

number of political representatives from the member organisations meet and discuss the objectives, principles and general lines of cooperation, including input from experts.

However, the overview of the member organisations' relevant strategic documents has shown that the Euregio is only, to a limited extent, referred to as a channel or a means to pursue the actors' interests. Other proposals that could have enhanced the contextual perception of the region were not pursued or failed. For example, the Euregio aimed to become administrator for the regional INTERREG A programme but did not succeed as the programme area was defined to include the whole of southern Finland and Estonia (Pikner, 2008: 217). Furthermore, the Euregio has not been recognised as an EURES cross-border partnership. The acknowledgement of such a status on the European level could have remarkably enhanced the visibility both inwards and outwards and would have supported its capacity to form the regional process not least through the allocation of additional funding. Thus, the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is a cross-border institution mainly known and used by the actors involved.

6.4 Symbolic Shaping

Apart from these more institutional forms of recognition, there have been several attempts to launch and further the idea of cooperation between the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn. Generally, symbolic shaping in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn often circulates around the terms twin-city/*kaksoiskaupunki* or the combination of both cities' names in the portmanteau *Talsinki*, while the Euregio itself is hardly perceived when it comes to the three interesting pieces giving input to the creation of a regional we-feeling.

The first publication was the booklet *Helsinki-Tallinna – kaksoiskaupunki: Tarua vai totta?* (Helsinki-Tallinn – twin city: Myth or truth?), edited by the Helsinki Tallinn society²¹³ in 1995. This publication bundles a wide range of short contributions including basic facts, a retrospect, cooperation in practice and concrete prospects for

²¹³ The Helsinki-Tallinn society (Helsinki Tallinna Seura) was founded in 1991 and has the aim of promoting cooperation between the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn. The Helsinki Tallinn society sees itself as a link between the citizens and the city governments and participates in all kinds of social, economic and cultural activities (<http://hetas.wordpress.com/>; 14.August 2013, 16:02).

further development of cooperation. Finally, it also comprises a more utopian section on visions and dreams, primarily about the impact of a potential railway tunnel on both cities.

In 2001, the *Vision Project Tallinn-Helsinki Twin-Region* was launched. In that process of vision formulation, which concentrated on economic development and the competitiveness of the region, a rather narrow group of “public officials and socio-economic development-oriented interest groups were involved” (Pikner, 2008: 217). Thus, the regional process was focussed on specific groups of actors from the beginning, and not characterised by a broad inclusion of societal actors.

In 2008, Martti Kalliala, a Finnish student of architecture, developed in his master thesis the idea of building *Talsinki Island* in the Gulf of Finland. The basic idea of his thesis is, if a tunnel should be built between both cities, one could use the excavated material to raise an artificial island in the Finnish Gulf, the so-called Talsinki-Island. In March 2009, a short summary of this work was presented in *Helsinki info*, a newspaper published by the city of Helsinki which is distributed to the city’s households six times a year. Moreover, his proposal has been included in a booklet presenting new ideas for the future development of the Finnish welfare state.²¹⁴

The most ambitious attempt was the book *Talsinki-Hellinna/Talsingi-Hellinn*, published by the Finnish think tank Demos’ Helsinki in 2009. This study was commissioned by the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn and was supposed to give new impulses to the region-building process across the Finnish Gulf. The basic idea of the book is to turn the twin-city into reality from both from a top-down and a bottom-up level. Thus, the book can be read from both sides, the *Talsinki* part concentrating on the top-down and the *Hellinna* part on the bottom-up perspective. In many respects its suggestions are fairly concrete, such as a project to reduce the cities’ energy consumption by 30 per cent, closer cooperation between universities and research facilities, increasing cooperation between the administrations of both cities, and the realisation of the tunnel. Apart from the very modern and tangible presentation, the book did not give the new impulses looked-for. The intended audience criticised the publication for presenting old wine in

²¹⁴ <http://primapaper.fi/helsinki-info-en/2009/02/primapaper>; (16. August 2013, 15:01). Kalliala, Martti/Sutela, Jenna/Toivonen, Tuomas, 2011: Solution 239-246: Finland: The Welfare Game, Berlin, 49-60.

new bottles and particularly the Estonian side raised critique for its reference to a polarising Estonian populist.

However, all these publications and all this input have not succeeded in becoming generally accepted, giving cooperation a common idea and turning it into an inherent part of the strategic considerations within the public administration, local policies or a broad public discourse.²¹⁵ Heliste et.al. generally point to the difficulty of media coverage of cross-border cooperation in the Helsinki-Tallinn area: "Usein media ei julkaise tietoa rajat ylittävästä yhteistyöstä, joka teemana on monille lukijoille melko vieras ja abstrakti. Yhdistyksen saama julkisuus on jäänyt pieneksi"²¹⁶ (Heliste et.al. 2004: 48-49). The most charismatic idea involving both cities and arousing most public attention seems to be the idea of building a tunnel.

Table 7: References to Euregio, Twin-city and Helsinki/Tallinn in the Strategic Documents of the Euregio's Member Organisations

	Euregio Helsinki Tallinn	Twin-city	Tallinn or Helsinki
City of Helsinki	x	x	x
Uusimaa Regional Council	x	x	x
City of Tallinn	x	x	x
Harju County Government			x
Union of Harju County Municipalities	x		

Table 7 on References to Euregio, Twin-city and Helsinki or Tallinn in the Strategic Documents of the Euregio's Member Organisations gives an overview of how the

²¹⁵ Apart from that, the Twin-city has found its way into the German media in the broadcast *Gesichter Europas: Zwei Länder, ein Ballungsgebiet – Europas neue Hauptstadtregion ‚Talsinki‘* on DRadio on 11.October 2008 (<http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/gesichtereuropas/856030/>; 14. August 2013, 16:48).

²¹⁶ *As the media often does not publish information about cross-border cooperation, the topic remains rather unfamiliar and abstract for the audience. Thus, public perception has been rather limited.*

regional perspective is reflected within the Euregio's member organisations. The idea of the twin city appears most often in the strategic documents of the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn and to a lesser extent also Uusimaa Regional Council. The remaining Estonian member organisations of the Euregio do not point to the twin-city. The same counts for the Euregio itself, while the Euregio is pretty present in the strategic documents of all Finnish partners and Tallinn, there are hardly references in the documents of Harju County Government and UHCM.

Accordingly, the regional perspective of the involved parts is rather divided among the different options for cooperation. This becomes even more distinct when Pikner points to the about 44 local municipalities in the area of the Euregio which all have a twin municipality in the respective other country, which of course reduces their interest in cooperation in the Euregio (Pikner, 2008: 219). Thus, the Euregio has not become an inherent part of the considerations of all actors in the cross-border context and in fact none of the named concepts has gained general acceptance.

Already in 2004, Heliste et.al. pointed to the importance filling the more abstract concept of the twin-city and the need to enhance the region's competitiveness with a more coherent conceptual background and with more concrete aims and issues (Heliste et. al., 2004: 47). The Euregio obviously faces similar problems as it has not succeeded in establishing the forum as primary tool for pursuing the member organisation's regional interests. Moreover, the conceptual link between the twin-city and the Euregio seems to be rather weak, as the twin-city most often has a bilateral connotation with a focus on the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn, and the Euregio, due to its member structure is more focused on functional urban areas.

While the concept of the twin-city is both concrete and vague enough to provide sufficient space for concrete ideas (e.g. the tunnel), for the common future of both cities, it has not been visualised until today. In contrast, the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn has an official logotype (Figure 11) which is used on the website and on official communication, particularly also in the context of the annual forum.



Figure 14: Logotype of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

This logotype primarily is composed of the lettering 'Euregio' which is characterised by two different tones of blue that are separated by a tapering white line, while the final letter 'o' is in the darker blue and makes reference to Europe via the yellow stars on the blue background, resembling the EU's flag. This white line can be interpreted both as the uniting and dividing character of the Finnish Gulf, which can be overcome in a European context. The reference to Helsinki and Tallinn is in remarkably smaller type size localised in the lower part of the logo. Moreover, the Euregio²¹⁷ Helsinki Tallinn has no common slogan that would provide a condensed idea of the contents of cooperation.

Thus, the symbolic dimension of the institutionalisation process of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is rather weak. Lepik and Krigul's findings that regional actors in majority do expect a continuing and strengthening development of the Euregio while they do not expect the development of a fully integrated cross-border region (Lepik/Krigul, 2009: 40-41) could serve a starting point for the formulation of a common slogan/vision.

6.5 The institutionalisation of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn

The preceding analysis has shown that the process of institutionalisation of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is characterised by a specific heterogeneity with regard to the different dimensions of symbolic, territorial and institutional shaping, and contextual perception.

²¹⁷ It would be interesting to find out how the decision regarding the region's name was taken. To make 'Euregio' an inherent part of the name of the region points in two directions. On the one hand it could be a rather programmatic decision, as this denotation refers to a pioneer and today most advanced region among the European border regions, the EUREGIO localised on the Dutch-German border. On the other hand it could only be the verification of the fact that the term 'Euregio' today often is used as a synonym for cross-border regions in Europe.

One of the most distinct factors are the territorial backgrounds of the individual member organisations and their impact. The different administrative systems in Estonia and Finland made it necessary to include three partners on the Estonian side. The Estonian part also includes the city of Tallinn, the nation state level in form of Harju County Government and the UHCM as an NGO, while Finland is represented in form of the regional entity Uusimaa Regional Council and the city of Helsinki. Among these member organisations Tallinn and Helsinki are, with regard to tasks, competences and administrative capacity, most similar, so that it is no surprise that they predominately set the tone within the Euregio in addition to the existing bilateral contacts between the single sections of their public administration.

The differences in the public administrative structure in Finland and Estonia can be perceived as hindrances with regard to the institutional shaping of a cross-border region. The process of finding an appropriate structure for the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn took three years and was, due to the differences in Finish and Estonian legislation, a very delicate issue (Lepik, 2010: 31). Under these circumstances, the territorial preconditions and their inherent restrictions for establishing cross-border institutions have even further implications for potential institutional change in the Euregio making formal adaptations of the statutes a rather difficult issue, not to mention the more general challenge of establishing a consensus on that issue among the different partners involved. These rigid territorial structures could also be an explanation for the fact that the issue of unequal representation of both national sides (3:2) within the Euregio has not been settled so far, although the wish for such an equal representation in order to safeguard a balanced decision-making process has been formulated (Pikner, 2008: 223). The dissatisfaction that lead to the informal adaptation of the structures in 2011 points in the same direction, while also raising the question of a common vision for future organisational development.

Several proposals for initiatives that could have helped to raise the contextual perception of the Euregio have been made since its foundation. However, none of these attempts has de facto had an impact on the contextual perception of the Euregio, instead they have primarily been perceived amongst the member organisations. Particularly the most recent input provided by Demos Helsinki did, once published, not measure up to the expectations. The lack of contextual perception was neither balanced through symbolic shaping, e.g. an eye-catching logotype or a slogan. Although *Talsinki*

or *twin-city* could be promising names for the region, they obviously do not correspond to the expectations of the regional actors. Instead, they point to an integrated twin-city that most of the regional actors do regard as rather unlikely or undesirable (Lepik/Krigul, 2009: 40-41). Apart from the general will for more integration, regional actors did – despite repeated declarations of intent in the Euregio’s action plans – not succeed in formulating a realistic idea for regional cooperation. This could also be the consequence of the different importance assigned to regional cooperation (see figure 13) and, thus, the result of a lacking consensus on the further development of the region and a general scepticism regarding comprehensive attempts of story-telling, as in case of the Talsinki-Hellinna booklet. Particularly in that case, the question of ownership of the publication seems to be relevant in order to explain its failure.

This lacking consensus also goes back to the different reasons of state reflected in the distinct approaches to regional development policy. The more market liberal orientation of Estonia where regional development primarily is left to the mechanism of supply and demand crystallises, versus the belief in the state as an important designing factor on the Finnish side. Regional development policy is an undisputed policy field in Finland and is formulated by the Finnish ministry of Economy, which delivers a comprehensive development plan for the whole country. In contrast, there are influential voices on the Estonian side that doubt the usefulness of regional development and regional growth policies in general.²¹⁸

Concluding, the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn is a cooperation forum that covers specific aspects of regional cooperation, while other forms of bilateral cooperation particularly between Helsinki and Tallinn coexist. Pikner provides an explanation for the general weakness of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, as it

“entered the interregional cooperation landscape rather late in 1999. Therefore the HTE, initiated mostly by the regional councils of Uusimaa and Harju, becomes partly parallel to the pre-existing interregional contacts and activities between the Helsinki and Tallinn regions” (Pikner, 2008: 219).

In addition, it is particularly the complicated territorial constellations, the organisation’s limited inclusiveness and its limited contextual perception, that make it

²¹⁸ This is basically also the result of the INTERREG IIIA project *Strateeg – Developing Helsinki and Tallinn metropolitan regions* that aimed to identify common development opportunities and thus also included an analysis of the prevailing conditions (Uusimaa Regional Council, 2007).

rather hard for the Euregio to strengthen its capacity as a solicitor of more comprehensive cross-border interests, to become visible in the overall region and to become part of people's every day life.

7. Development of Urban-based forms of Cross-border Cooperation

The conceptual idea of this study is that regional and multi-level governance make a significant contribution to develop a more precise understanding of the three dimensions of Anssi Paasi's institutionalisation of regions. In order to combine these two partly diverging approaches, I formulated an open catalogue of questions, providing an open guiding line for the single case studies (chapter 2).

Thus, the precedent chapters investigated the evolution and development of urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region through the application of four different aspects of the process of the *institutionalisation of regions*: territorial shaping, symbolic shaping, institutional shaping and contextual perception. These single aspects were discovered more precisely through research questions that were formulated with reference to multi-level and regional governance approaches. Using a catalogue of common questions, this study aimed to safeguard comparability of the case studies, while leaving space to reflect and grasp the cases' individual characteristics. Thus, the case studies have provided a comprehensive overview of the three cases selected. Taking these case studies as a point of reference, the subsequent section elaborates on to what extent the processes of institutionalisation of regions differ or resemble in the light of the answers to the research questions. Moreover, this section points to three additional aspects that are only partly covered through the research questions but which appear to be crucial in order to grasp the strong variety of the single cases. Finally, returning to the comparative analysis, the study identifies aspects that appear as particularly favourable for the institutionalisation of a cross-border region.

Generally, the case studies proof *territorial shaping*, in the sense of borders as social constructs and manifestations of interest constellation, materialises in different ways. For political cooperation across borders the national political systems and particularly the local government systems have a decisive impact on the institutional shaping of a cross-border cooperation, as different national administrative and political systems have according to the opinion of the actors to be harmonised, respectively, balanced. The formal and informal rules how decisions are to be taken and by whom, decide on the impact of a political actor. Thus, the opportunity to easily identify a corresponding

partner on the other side turns into an important factor. Accordingly, changes in local government may – depending on their degree – unfold remarkable impact on the institutional shaping of the cross-border organisation. For example, they define the single actor's space of action, provide the basis for membership in the cross-border organisation and they form the legal background which a cross-border organisation is built upon.

Particularly the Oresund region has experienced some remarkable changes in the territorial structure, with the establishment of Region Skåne and the profound changes in Danish local government in 2007. In both cases, member structures were adapted. However, while the establishment of Region Skåne meant a bundling of Swedish interests in the region, and had relatively similar regional level competences on both sides of the Oresund as a consequence, the 2007 local government reform in Denmark changed the administrative geography, political competences and policy-making structures remarkably. Thus, Danish membership in the Oresund Committee had to be adapted and a long-standing view on the Danish side – the Oresund Committee as a primarily region-based institution - was abandoned and materialised in the inclusion of representatives from the local contact councils. However, in face of the far-reaching changes and the general weakening of the regional level, one could have expected the changes in the Oresund Committee's member structure to be even more profound. Obviously, the balance between the different member organisations has de facto not been changing too much, as informal practices still give the regional level an important position within regional planning, though lacking formal competences. Here the continuous existence of cooperative practices since the 1990s seems to be the key to continuing stability in cross-border cooperation, despite the changes in formal competences and duties. Interestingly, the principle of symmetric representation, an equal number of representatives of both national sides has been sustained.

Symmetric representation counts also for the GO-Region, where the overall number of Swedish and Norwegian representatives is congruent. Here, the transfer of competences to new state agencies in Norway had no impact on the formal institutionalisation of the GO-Region but reduced the congruity of tasks and responsibilities of Swedish and Norwegian regional municipalities. Primarily the internal processes of decision-making have changed. This will become crucial for cross-border collaboration, if regional actors identify the need for cooperation in affected

policy areas, like health or innovation. Longer coordination and decision taking processes are the most probable consequences.

In contrast, the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn is characterised by asymmetry, due to the different local government structures in Finland and Estonia and particularly due to the absence of a democratically legitimised regional level in Estonia. Thus, the Finnish side is only represented with two actors: the city of Helsinki and Uusimaa Regional council, while the Estonian side includes three entities: the city of Tallinn as a local municipality, Harju County Government as the representation of the nation state on the regional level and the UHCM, an NGO bundling the local municipalities in Harju County. There are no regulations about the inclusion of other political representatives, so that the Euregio's General Meeting formally appears as a very small body.

Furthermore, the differences in both legal systems made it difficult to find a common legal framework. The fact that it took three years to establish a common body shows how hard it was to find an appropriate form of institutionalisation. Moreover, it set high hurdles for potential formal institutional change, as reflected in the recent informal rearrangement of the structures. In a rather young institution with relatively complex territorial preconditions, that still has to develop its own "tradition of cooperation", it is hardly surprising that the most similar actors, the cities of Helsinki and Tallinn, form the core of cross-border cooperation activities.

In summary, changes in the domestic and European power and interest constellations lead to institutional adjustments on the cross-border level. The case studies show that the character of these adaptations, be it formal or informal, depends on the cooperation culture, that evolved over the years. Moreover, the institutional structure and its adaptability decides whether these adjustments are of formal or informal character.

It is in particular the case of Estonia and Finland, that reflects the significance of similar reasons of state. Like in Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Finland's welfare state is based on a large public sector, high income tax and comprehensive public services. Estonia's market liberal model in contrast, results in a different paradigm for state organisation: a comparably small public sector, a flat-tax system and public services that are reduced to fields where they can not be provided by the market. This self-understanding has far-reaching consequences on the local municipalities, their financial and human resources and not least, on the congruency of interests and the capacity to participate in cross-border cooperation. Particularly the differences

regarding tasks and duties, as well as financial and human resources and the role assigned to regional development policy poses a serious challenge for more active cross-border cooperation in the Euregio.

In all three cases, we find *overlapping member structures*. In the Oresund region, this counts for example for the representatives of KKR, in which the Oresund Committees members Copenhagen and Frederiksberg are represented, too. In the GO-Region this regards the recently included representatives of the cross-border organisation Gränskomiteen where the GO-Region's members Østfold and Västra Götalandsregion are represented, too. In the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn, this counts for the city of Helsinki, which is also a member of Uusimaa Regional council, and the city of Tallinn, which is also a member of UHCM. This points to the network-like character of the single cross-border organisations, which seems to be strongest in case of the GO-Region, which also includes representatives from business and science, and also in case of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, through the asymmetric representation of the national parts.

In contrast, the *long tradition of cross-border cooperation between the Nordic countries* creates a favourable environment for the establishment of cross-border cooperation bodies, both regarding the legal preconditions and the general willingness to cooperate across borders. Supplemented by increased funding through *European regional policy*, the preconditions for cross-border cooperation are particularly advantageous among the Nordic countries.²¹⁹ Moreover, the difficulties in finding a legal form for the Euregio also point to the fact that EU regulation does not facilitate cross-border institution-building but concentrates on the implementation of general regional policies through the varying funding schemes.

In all three cases, the organisations are not in a position that allows them to enforce the *implementation of formal binding decisions*, thus they strongly rely on mutual trust and common experiences. As most of the relevant decisions are taken on other political levels, the major task of the cross-border organisations is to find a common position and to coordinate action in order to make their interests heard on the other political levels. Thus, cross-border cooperation corresponds more to 'cross-border

²¹⁹ In their comparative study of three cases of cross-border cooperation along the Finnish border Heliste/Kosonen argue in a similar way in the context of the example Harparanda-Tornio (Heliste/Kosonen, 2004: 23).

coordination', a learning and lobbying process that helps to develop common strategies and to implement them independently.

Financial resources of the three organisations vary remarkably. While in the GO-Region and the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn the two national sides today stand for the equal share of the institutions' budget, the Oresund region has established a financing mechanism where the member organisations pay a certain amount of money per citizen. The overall budget varies remarkably from 1.6 Million Euros for the Oresund Committee in 2009, to 250,000 Euros for the GO-Region in 2011, and estimated 100,000 Euros for the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn. This allocation of resources of course has a remarkable impact on the strategic capacity of the respective organisation.

Symbolic shaping differs strongly among the individual cases. While symbolic shaping processes have been most comprehensive in the Oresund region, the activities in the GO-Region and the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn have been rather different. The GO-Region has both a logo and a slogan. The significance of these symbolic distillates of the idea behind regional cooperation came to the fore as the GO-region's actors regarded it as important to change the original slogan in order to better fit the general conditions with the potentials of the region. Thus, the former slogan "two countries – one region" was changed into "borderless opportunities".

In contrast, the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn has a logo and no slogan or form of story-telling that gives a summary of the content of cross-border cooperation. The concept of the twin-city has served as an important source for inspiration for cross-border cooperation in the Euregio, but has not become an inherent part of the organisation's self understanding, probably also due to its focus on the two cities. The publication Talsinki-Hellinna, providing a vision for the future development of the region, attempted to give input into the regional process and to increase symbolic shaping of the region but has not succeeded in practice.²²⁰

In contrast to that, the Oresund region is characterised by a strong symbolic shaping, primarily through the bridge but also through a slogan and a logo. Particularly the fact

²²⁰ Apart from the reference to the controversial Estonian populist that was heavily criticised by regional actors, another explanation for the limited success regarding symbolic shaping could be a general scepticism regarding comprehensive narratives on the Estonian side. The development of an integrated cross-border region could be perceived as threatening the independence of the Estonian actors, while independence has been one of, if not *the* most appreciated good in recent Estonian history.

that the new combined letter Ö/Ø is, together with the official logo, increasingly used to mark the region also shows that there is a more independent dynamic in the symbolic dimension of the regional process. Moreover, the Oresund region is characterised by a strong story-telling that continuously, almost mantra-like, provides the basic facts of the region and their distinct interpretation from a regional economic perspective; most interestingly there are similarities, while still rudimentary trends in the GO-Region. Interestingly, in all three cases, a we-feeling within society can be localised at a continuum ranging from weak to non-existent.

Thematically, all cases share a regional economic perspective; all aim to raise the respective region's profile in order to better succeed in international competition. Thus, the concept of the *Europe of Regions*, though increasingly perceived as out-dated, is perpetuated and has become an inherent part of the regions' self-understanding. Moreover, all three forums for cooperation cover a variety of issues, ranging from culture and business to science and the like. For the time being, emphasis in all three cases is on the issue of transport infrastructure.

The *institutional shaping* of the single organisations varies remarkably, while the Oresund region is the most formalised form of regional cooperation. The institutional structures of the GO-Region and the Euregio are less comprehensive. It is interesting that the GO-Region regulates the working groups in detail while remaining rather sketchy with regard to other elements of its organisational structure. Obviously here, a great deal of the organisation's work is to be done, and thus, an increased focus on more regulation. While membership and the question of the members' representation is regulated in detail in the Oresund case and the GO-Region and covers a broad range of actors, membership in the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is, with five member organisations, rather narrow. Compared with the other two cases, the Euregio lacks a broader inclusion of local and regional politicians, which could also help to increase contextual perception within the member organisations.

The degree of *contextual perception* differs in all three cases and most suitably presented in accordance with the single political levels: the local, the regional, the national and the European level. On the local level, the Oresund region has a very strong contextual perception as it has become part of the central strategic documents of most of its member organisations. The member organisations of the Euregio Helsinki Tallinn and the GO-Region also mention the cross-border perspective but without

providing many more details and without a far reaching vision as in case of the Oresund region.

Contextual perception also varies on the European level. All three regions are covered by INTERREG A programmes. While the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn belongs to the Southern Finland-Estonia sub-programme of the Central Baltic INTERREG IVA, the GO – Region is covered by the INTERREG IVA Øresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak, particularly the subprogramme Kattegat-Skagerrak, while the Oresund region has its own INTERREG sub-programme. Moreover, the Oresund region is officially an EURES partnership and receives funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers for its work on the reduction of cross-border hindrances.

All three forms of cooperation are present on the national level. While the Oresund perspective is reflected in important planning documents in both Sweden and Denmark, it was particularly the congruency of national and regional interests regarding transport infrastructure which helped increase the GO-Region's perception on the national level. Moreover, the GO-Region is present at the nation-state level as the Norwegian Ministry of Local and Regional Government provides Norwegian co-funding for the INTERREG programme. The two reports by the Estonian and the Finnish prime minister show that Estonian-Finnish relations traditionally have a high priority and that good relations between both cities are regarded as important. Although the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn is not mentioned in these documents, the participation of national ministries in cross-border projects like HTTransPlan indicates that the Euregio is present on the national level, too.

Finally, the Oresund region is also widely known in the community of cross-border regions through active participation in the AEBC and several awards, which supports its reputation as a model-region. However, contextual perception of the Oresund Region is primarily limited to the political arena and is rather low in the local society.

Together with the four dimensions of the institutionalisation of regions, a comprehensive comparative perspective makes it reasonable to add three further aspects that have not been covered so far: (1) geographical preconditions, (2) marginalisation and (3) timing.

(1) Although all three cases are characterised by structural similarities and a specific geographical proximity, the actual travel time between both cities detects important

differences that have a remarkable impact on the potential for cross-border cooperation. While travel time from central Copenhagen to central Malmö is only about 35 to 40 minutes, it takes three hours by car and almost 4 hours by train from Gothenburg to Oslo and 3 hours and 20 minutes by ferry, and 1 hour 40 minutes by catamaran from Helsinki to Tallinn. This is a factor that is not to be underestimated in the process of creating a common cross-border region. Short travel time increases the probability for the development of an integrated cross-border region as it enables people to establish close contacts and to meet rather spontaneously. Thus, the physical preconditions for all three cross-border regions vary remarkably and may be of decisive importance in defining the goals of the respective cross-border region. How realistic is the idea of a common labour market in the GO-Region even if a high-speed railway connected both cities within two hours? On the other hand it could be attractive to live in the middle of both centres and to have access to both labour markets. Thus, the most interesting aspect regarding the GO-region's future potentially regards the corridor between its core cities.

(2) Looking for the primary reasons for the establishment of a cross-border cooperation, the feature of marginalisation and the prospect of overcoming such a position comes into focus. This is interesting, as the feature of marginalisation is often associated with remote rural areas in the peripheries and not with urban or even capital areas. Nevertheless, marginalisation has, in all three cases, had an important triggering impact on the establishment of cross-border cooperation, though, the quality of the perceived marginalisation has varied. Thus, marginalisation is a relative feature.

In case of the Oresund region, domestic marginalisation goes back to the both mental and institutionalised traditional rivalry between Jutland and the Danish capital area, as well as rivalry between Skåne/Malmö and Stockholm. In that context, the decision to build the fixed link across the Oresund turned political attention to the Oresund region and increased the willingness for common action on all political levels.

The GO-region is primarily a reaction to the marginalising potential in face of the re-launch of the regional process across the Oresund, in the context of Sweden's EU accession, the construction of the Oresund fixed link and the prospect of the Oresund region's full eligibility for INTERREG funding. Finally, the Helsinki-Tallinn cooperation was basically fuelled by the prospect of overcoming the marginalisation that had been perceived as unnatural over a period of about 40 years and was seen as a tool to

overcome the marginalisation based in Finland's EU membership and Estonian accession status. Today, marginalising potential is primarily seen in the international competition of cities and urban regions.

(3) This points to the third important aspect: timing. Particularly the example of the Oresund region provides striking evidence in this respect. The opportunity structures for its antecedent organisations: Oresund Council and Oresund Contact, were not very favourable. In face of the repeated delay of the decision to build a fixed link, lacking political profile of the cross-border organisations and lacking visibility on the national level, as well as general reluctance regarding such a far-reaching project as presented in the public debate during the 1950s and 1960s, the Oresund institutions and the idea of an integrated cross-border region led a life in the political shadows. Thus, the establishment of a strong regional organisation, both with regard to human resources and financial capacity can also be interpreted as a case of institutional learning. However, not everything is perfect in the Oresund region, many border hindrances continue to exist and troubles with the rail traffic across the bridge or taxation and social security foster critique, however, compared to the other cases, it is fairly successful in creating conditions that make it easy to cross the border as an employee, company or normal citizen.

Thus, marginalisation together with path-breaking political decisions or prospects for such decisions have been catalysing factors for the formalisation of cross-border cooperation. However, once established, the assertiveness of activities in these cross-border regions largely depends on congruency with the current topics in the domestic political debate. Thus, cross-border cooperation often is a cyclical process, where phases of topical incongruity are characterised by forms of stagnation or slow down. In some cases these periods can be overcome more easily, while it is rather difficult in others. For the further development of the Oresund region, the decisions to build the Fehmarn belt fixed link and to localise the ESS in Lund and Copenhagen are important catalysing decisions that perpetuate the institutionalisation of the region. These decisions are also of importance for the GO-Region, considering the idea of a science corridor from Hamburg via Oresund to Oslo or when looking at the pressure that the prospects of the Fehmarn Belt fixed link puts on the political actors for the further extension of the, particularly rail, infrastructure both in Sweden and Norway. For the

Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, the project Rail Baltica and its link towards the Finish capital, be it in form of a tunnel or an improved ferry service, are important issues.

In a nutshell, all three cases have shown that each form of cross-border cooperation has chosen individual paths that take into account the specificities in the respective region's background; they have shown that the evolution and development of cross-border cooperation, the process of the institutionalisation of a cross-border region is very complex and that it is often hard to clearly separate its different dimensions or to identify clear causalities, much more, they are - to a large extent - characterised by interrelatedness and mutual influences. Particularly the territorial preconditions have considerable impact on the institutional design of the cross-border organisation. However, apart from all these individual specificities, some aspects seem to be particularly favourable for the development of cross-border cooperation, while others appear obstructive.

To the favourable preconditions belong: similar political systems, similar reasons of state, broad inclusion and symmetric representation of the national parts, the development of a common idea and story-telling, the definition of motivating and feasible targets for cooperation, work on concrete projects and their implementation, long-term engagement, favourable contextual conditions in form of EU and Nordic regional policies and sufficient financial resources. A regional we-feeling seems to be particularly important among the actors and the administration of its member organisations in order to make the cross-border dimension part of their daily business, in order to come to common positions and decisions, and to work for their implementation. A successful cross-border region for the citizens is most probably one where they naturally and unconsciously make use of the facilities on both sides of the border, be it healthcare, transport, job opportunities, educational institutions, cultural offerings and the like.

8. Summary and Outlook

This study discovered the variety of urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region. It has shown that the three urban-based forms of cross-border cooperation, the Oresund Region, the GO-Regiona and the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, are characterised by specific similarities and differences in territorial institutional, symbolic and contextual shaping. The most striking congruity between all cases seems to be how they assess their context; the idea of inter-urban competition, the inherent need for more cooperation in order to have a critical mass and thus to succeed under these circumstances appears to be broadly accepted among all actors.

As regards content, accessibility guaranteed by an extended and consolidated smooth transport infrastructure appears to be a central issue, particularly in context of a global economy conceptualised as a network of competing urban areas. In the logic of the global and regional competition of urban areas, particularly the relatively small European cities follow the logic of building alliances in order to raise their visibility and attraction on the international scale.

This brings us back to the two types of transnational forms of city cooperation distinguished by the EU and referred to in the introduction to this study. Type 1 describes neighbouring cities in a common functional area, type 2 cities in a broader geographical basin. But how do the three cases of this study fit this differentiation? The GO-Region belongs, due to the large distance between its core cities, to type 2. The Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn comprises two neighbouring cities separated by the Finnish Gulf in a distance of 88 kilometres and is hardly a common functional area, thus, by tendency it also corresponds more to type 2. Finally, the Oresund region shows features of both types: cooperating neighbouring cities like Copenhagen/Malmoe and Elsinore and Helsingborg, a common functional area primarily provided by a comparably excellent cross-border transport, ticketing system and labour market, and a broader geographical basin in form of the more rural parts of the region.

Again, all three cases try to enlarge their regional frame of reference or the geographical basin they belong to. In case of the Euregio Helsinki-Tallinn, the inclusion of St. Petersburg provides an interesting perspective for the future – a study even talks about the Finnish Gulf Region. Particularly in the Baltic Sea Region's Western part,

where many regional cooperation structures overlap, the idea of establishing a science corridor has increasingly been regarded as attractive over the last years. This idea is flanked by overlapping regional cooperation forums: the GO-Region and the Oresund Region are connected through the Scandinavian Arena, furthermore, the Oresund Region has close ties to Northern Germany (in particular Hamburg) through STRING²²¹ cooperation. This southern perspective is supported by the Fehmarn Belt fixed link to come. Large investments in transport infrastructure are to be made in this context in order to guarantee smooth transportation, which will also have an impact on Oslo's, Gothenburg's and Stockholm's accessibility.

In that manner, opportunity structures for increased transnational cooperation are, for the time being, rather favourable in the Western Baltic Sea Region. Regional actors actively work for a more favourable INTERREG A geography for the funding period 2014-2020 and an increased compatibility of the individual programme components.²²² Moreover, strategic documents and regional activities show signs of increasing regional activities in the Western Baltic Sea Region, primarily with regard to transport infrastructure but also potential in other fields like science or green growth. Thus, the interest in a good transport connection to the European continent via the Oresund bridge and the fixed Fehmarnbelt link as well as the prospect for a second fixed link across the Oresund appear to be the main drivers for growing regional activities in the BSR's western part. In the case of the Euregio, the same applies for the implementation of Rail and Via Baltica.

Urban-based forms of cross-border regions are localised in a very sensitive field of powers. Changes and re-arrangements both within the individual region and in its territorial context are of high importance for its future development. Particularly with regard to the relatively unexplored feature of type 2 forms of transnational city cooperation, further research is needed in order to discover their set-ups, their aims and activities as well as their potential within the European multi-level architecture.

²²¹ STRING cooperation was launched in 1999 in the prospect of a fixed link between the German island Fehmarn and the Danish island Falster. After a relatively high activism in the early period, the decision to build a fixed link across the Fehmarn belt in 2008 brought new dynamics to the region. Today, the focus is on regional development and green growth (<http://www.stringnetwork.org/>; 23. August 2013; 10:22).

²²² With the upcoming programming period, changes are on the horizon as a result of the merger of two INTERREG IV A programme areas, Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N. and Fehmarnbelt across the German-Danish border into one INTERREG V A programme. (<http://www.interreg4a.de/wm397966>; 28.August 2013; 10:03).

Moreover, it would be very fruitful to widen the study's comparative European horizon including for example the developments in the Quattropole²²³ or the Centrope²²⁴ region in order to find out whether the three Baltic Sea cases share a specific common feature or whether they represent a general trend across Europe.

²²³ Quattropole is a cooperation forum of four cities in the German, French, Luxembourgian border region (Metz, Trier, Saarbrücken and Luxembourg), (<http://www.quattropole.org/de/home>; 10. October 2013, 13:23).

²²⁴ Centrope is a cooperation forum on the Austrian –Slovakian- Hungarian- Czech border that is composed of the cities of Vienna, Bratislava, Győr and Brno (<http://www.centrope.com/en/>; 10. October 2013, 13: 24).

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